

Lawn problems:

Chafer Grubs

What are they?

Chafer grubs are soil-dwelling larvae of chafer beetles. They feed on the roots of grasses and other plants. Damage to lawns is most obvious between autumn and spring when the grubs are reaching maturity.

What do they look like?

They have stout white bodies curved in a C shape, light brown heads with three pairs of legs at the head end. They are bigger than the adult beetles and, if straightened out, would be up to 18mm (almost 3/4in) long. Other less troublesome species of chafer grubs can also occur in turf and these can have larvae up to 30mm (over an inch).

How do I know if they are present?

Patches of lawn may become yellowish. Birds, particularly of the crow family (jays, magpies, rooks and crows) and badgers and foxes feed on the grubs, tearing up the loosened turf in the process.

Why did they appear in my lawn?

Damaging infestations can be highly localized and sporadic in occurrence. Poorly maintained lawns are more susceptible to damage, so attention paid to feeding, watering and moss prevention will help avoid damaging infestations. The species most often found damaging lawns are the garden chafer, particularly found in sandy soils.

A healthy, well fed lawn is most able to withstand the activities of insect larvae and this is a good reason to always use a pre-turfing fertiliser before laying it.

How do I get rid of them?

Environmental concerns mean chemical control is no longer possible with the withdrawal of pesticides used for the control of chafer larvae. If you can see chafer larvae on your turf just pick them off and release them somewhere else.

Biological control can also be used in the form of nematodes. These are microscopic parasitic worms which only feed on specific insects. Because they are very small they have to be used at the correct time of year and in exactly the correct conditions of soil moisture and temperature. Their use is economical when the lawn is small but would be impractical on a field scale. Nematodes used to control insect pests are known by their Latin names. Those used to control chafer grubs are normally *Heterorhabditis megidis* or *H. bacteriofora*. Sources of nematodes can easily be found on the internet.

How do I repair the lawn?

Damage caused to the turf is usually temporary and will cease when the larvae metamorphose into adults and fly away. Repair damaged turf by re-sowing with grass seed or lay new turf.

Chafer Grubs are the large, white larva of chafer beetles that feed on the roots of most cool-latitude grasses, both wild and cultivated.

