



**Community Notification #2007 – 11
(Issued 9/11/07)**

Summers in southwest Florida – especially this year with its inconsistent rainfall and high temperatures – can be extremely stressful to lawns here in Burnt Store Lakes, subjecting them to a variety of damage from insects to disease. This summer’s weather conditions appear to have created a greater than usual problem with one of our lawns’ most persistent predator – the chinch bug.

For those BSL property owners who may be experiencing chinch bug damage, which often appears as drought stress, the POA has posted information on the website about identifying and treating a chinch bug infested lawn, as well as “links” to helpful organizations where additional information can be found.

To review this information, simply visit www.bslpoa.org - click on the Notifications “button” and open Notification 2007 – 11.

Chinch Bugs and Lawn Damage

The hot, humid weather of southwest Florida, especially during this summer of inconsistent rainfall and high temperatures, is extremely stressful to the lawns that showcase our homes here in Burnt Store Lakes. A particular threat to the popular St. Augustine grasses (Floritam, Raleigh, and Seville) is the chinch bug which, if left untreated, can destroy sections or entire lawns. While St. Augustine grass is the chinch bug’s preferred target, it will feed on other grass species as well. Nymph and adult chinch bugs feed on plant fluids within the sheath using a needle-like beak, killing the grass plants and contributing to weed invasion. These injured areas are first noticed along concrete or asphalt paved edges or in water stressed areas where the grass is growing in full sun.

Other factors, such as disease, nematodes, and nutritional imbalances can cause off-color areas in lawns. Therefore, the lawn should be carefully examined to determine which corrective measures are needed. Several insects live in St. Augustine grass lawns, so proper identification is important before deciding that a problem exists. Cultural practices such as frequent application of water-soluble nitrogen fertilizers may increase southern chinch bug survival, development time, and the number of eggs that

can be laid rather than help the plants outgrow any damage. Responsible use of slow-release nitrogen fertilizers may help reduce pest population build-up.

Southern chinch bugs feed on fluids within the grass plants. Thus it is likely a myth that chinch bugs are attracted to drought stressed lawns. It is more likely that they develop faster in areas that have higher temperatures (un-shaded areas). If plants are wilting from drought, they probably are not a good food source for chinch bugs. However, chinch bug damage could easily resemble drought-stress. Proper diagnosis of the problem is essential to growing healthy turfgrass.

The source(s) for the above information are noted below. Please refer to the following links for complete information about these pests and how they can best be treated:

<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/LH036>

<http://yourfloridalawn.ifas.ufl.edu/insectsinyourlawn.htm>