

Bugs & Blights

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European crane fly – OLD INVASIVE.

In 2015, we had a resurgence of crane fly questions in our Snohomish County office. These were the first crane fly questions we've had in a long time. Most people noticed them after a heavy rain when crane flies fled to the surface to keep from drowning then wiggled their way to the drier pavement of sidewalks and driveways. Even so, not all lawns had crane flies and it is still important to monitor lawns. Todd Murray, when he was in Whatcom County, had conducted a Master Gardener survey for homeowners who thought they had crane flies. He found that 95% did not have crane fly at all or didn't have enough per square foot to warrant damage. He also led the team of myself and Eric LaGasa and others in forming the Crane Fly Pests of the Pacific Northwest website <http://whatcom.wsu.edu/cranefly/> and posted a pictorial guide to sampling for crane fly.

Damage caused by crane flies includes yellowing of lawn, grazing grass blades till no lawn is left. Crane flies hide in the soil by day and feed at night or on dark, gray rainy days. Typical pencil-sized holes are diagnostic for crane fly. Earthworm holes have a pile of "soil" or worm castings next to the hole.

European crane fly info can be found in the Turf section of the PNW Insect Management Handbook available in hardcopy and on-line at <http://insect.pnwhandbooks.org/>. Click on contents and select the horticultural, landscape and ornamental crops, then select turfgrass pests.

European chafer – NEW INVASIVE.

Oh, that it would be so simple to deal with European crane flies. Last year at the same time as crane flies were on the rise, the European chafer which had entered Canada and established in British Columbia was found in the Sea-Tac area. European chafer is similar to Japanese beetle, in that the larvae are serious lawn pests. Larvae are white C-shaped beetle grubs typical of the scarab family. They feed on grass ROOTS rather than blades. Infested lawns can be lifted up like a loose rug where larvae have severed the grass roots. Like Japanese beetle, the large scarab beetle adults have a big appetite for the leaves and flowers of a wide variety of trees and shrubs. More fascinating detail and comparison photos are provided in the new WSU Pest Watch: European Chafer bulletin. <http://cru.cahe.wsu.edu/CEPublications/FS078E/FS078E.pdf>

European chafer made a rather large leap from B.C. to the King-Pierce county area so it is likely that they will start popping up in other counties. It will be important to distinguish the insect causing turf damage as controls are very different. In both cases, these grubs are tasty morsels for insectivores like raccoons, skunks, starlings and possibly other birds. Watch for lawns being dug up by raccoons. Sample any suspicious areas by digging a six inch square to a depth of 3-4 inches. More details are also available in the Emerging Pests section of the PNW Insect Management Handbook. <http://insect.pnwhandbooks.org/>