

Bug-Wise

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Office: 1-662-325-2085

Two-lined Spittlebugs: During June large numbers of adult two-lined spittlebugs were observed in many home lawns and landscapes, as well as in fields and unmanaged weedy areas. These were the adults of the first generation. Second generation nymphs will be hatching soon and second generation adults will appear in August and September. This insect is primarily a pest of lawns, especially centipede lawns, and last year many lawns sustained injury from the heavy infestations that occurred in some parts of the state.

Two-lined spittlebugs are easily identified by the two bright red lines that cross each of the dark maroon-colored wings. This accounts for the 'two-lined' part of their name, but what about the 'spittle'? This part of the name is due to the habit of the nymphs, which produce frothy masses of 'spittle' on the stems or stolens of their host plants. One sometimes hears these spittle masses referred to as 'frog spit'. These spittle masses protect the nymphs from both predators and desiccation, and several nymphs may occur within a single spittle mass.

Adults use their piercing-sucking mouthparts to suck sap from stems and leaves. The nymphs feed similarly, but form their spittle masses deeper in the turf on the stems and stolens near the crown of the plant. The adults produce toxic saliva, which can cause significant injury to susceptible grasses. Initial symptoms include yellowing of the leaves, but heavy infestations can result in weak, unhealthy areas and even dead brown patches. **Centipede is the species that is most susceptible to injury**, but infestations also occur in St. Augustine and Bermudagrass. Bermudagrass pastures and hay fields also are sometimes infested.

Heavy infestations are favored by wet, rainy conditions, or by lush vigorously growing grass, and it is often the 'prettiest centipede lawn in the neighborhood' that experiences the heaviest infestations. Lawns that are well fertilized, frequently watered, mown relatively high, and suffer from excessive thatch are especially susceptible. This is because the nymphs, which have no known natural enemies, thrive in moist, humid conditions. Obviously cultural practices play an important role in managing this pest. Taking steps to minimize thatch build up, keeping grass mown to the proper height and avoiding excessive water and fertilization can reduce the potential for problems.

This insect produces two or three generations per year, and the adults of the second generation will begin emerging in August and September. It is normally the second generation that causes the greatest damage to home lawns and many lawns sustained injury during late summer of last year. Homeowners with susceptible lawns can prevent this problem by checking for the presence of spittle masses and treating promptly if necessary to prevent the development of large numbers of second generation adults.

Scout lawns by parting turf and looking for the white frothy spittle masses. Turf that is heavily infested sometimes has a squishy feel when being walked on. If moderate to heavy infestations are encountered treat using a liquid spray of a recommended insecticide. Sprays are usually more effective than granules for controlling spittlebugs because granules tend to fall below the target zone. Hose end sprayers are a convenient method of applying spittlebug treatments, and many home lawn insecticides are available in ‘ready to use’ hose-end spray containers. Mowing and watering before treatment will enhance control.

In addition to feeding on grass, adults will also feed on the stems of shrubs, and they are especially fond of holly. Occasionally, holly plants suffer distortion and injury to terminal twigs as a result of injury by this pest.

Some Insecticides For Control of Two-lined Spittlebugs in Home Lawns

Active Ingredient	Brand Name (one example)
Carbaryl (22.5%)	Sevin Concentrate Bug Killer
lambda Cyhalothrin (0.5%)	Triazicide Soil & Turf Insect Killer Concentrate
Cyfluthrin (0.75%)	Bayer Power Force Multi-Insect Killer

The brand names mentioned in this publication are used as examples only. No endorsement of these products is intended. Other appropriately labeled products containing similar active ingredients should provide similar levels of control. Always read and follow the insecticide label.

Pale-bordered Field Cockroach: “It’s the prettiest roach I’ve ever seen!”. More and more people are reporting sightings of the pale-bordered field cockroach. Although it is a relatively new arrival to Mississippi, this insect is now present in many areas of the state. It is relatively common in the Starkville area, as well as in more southerly portions of the state. Because of its novelty and striking markings, this insect usually attracts attention and comments whenever it is spotted.

Fortunately, as the name implies, this is an outdoor species, that rarely ventures indoors. It is most commonly observed early in the morning or late in the afternoon, when it moves about foraging on plants. However, it does not appear to cause any significant plant injury. Although it is considered to be a new, invading species, it does not appear that this insect will become a serious pest.

The pale-bordered field cockroach is about ¾ inches long and is named for the broad light yellow band that borders the wings and thorax. While the head and thorax are chestnut brown, the rest of the body is a dark black in color, and can appear deep purple in certain light. This ‘purple and gold’ appearance can be quite striking and can even remind LSU alumni of their school colors.