

Summer 2026: Turf Pests to Watch Out For

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This year has had its fair share of challenges for turfgrasses throughout Arkansas. Arkansas is squarely in the transition zone of the United States, where both cool- and warm-season turfgrasses grow. Being located in the transition zone also means that lots of weeds, diseases, and insect pests thrive here. I have seen large outbreaks of dollar spot (as I mentioned in last month's *Pest Management Newsletter*) and crabgrass this year. Increasing heat in many parts of the state have put cool-season grasses through severe stress and high disease pressure. Moreover, it is time to start scouting for fall armyworms in turf. This newsletter will address some of the main turfgrass pest challenges this summer and some helpful ways to address them.

Crabgrass

This has been a banner year for crabgrass throughout the state of Arkansas (**Figure 1**). At this point, it is far too late for PRE herbicide control of crabgrass, but there are some POST herbicide options. The primary herbicide that is effective for post-emergent control of crabgrass is quinclorac (Drive XLR8) tank-mixed with an adjuvant such as methylated seed oil. Although quinclorac has POST activity on crabgrass, it is most efficacious against younger crabgrass plants. Efficacy may be sporadic on mature plants, and multiple applications will be required for adequate control. Cultural management practices such as raising mowing heights and fertilizing appropriately to increase turfgrass competition will help suppress crabgrass in turf systems.



Figure 1. Crabgrass (light green) in bermudagrass lawn.

Dollar Spot

Dollar spot has been a widespread issue on all turfgrass species within the state, but I have noticed more of it on under-fertilized bermudagrass lawns this year (**Figure 2**). A simple fertilizer application that includes nitrogen can substantially reduce dollar spot. Dew removal practices such as morning mowing, increasing airflow, and wetting agent applications are also recommended to reduce dollar spot pressure. Fungicides such as fluxapyroxad and propiconazole are highly effective against dollar spot.



Figure 2. Dollar spot in bermudagrass lawn.

Summer Patch

For Kentucky bluegrass lawns in the northern part of the state and for creeping bentgrass golf course putting greens in central and northern Arkansas, summer patch is a major disease of concern right now (**Figure 3**). Summer patch symptoms commonly manifest during severely hot temperatures, especially when accompanied with limited precipitation. We have had a wet late spring/early summer in most parts of the state, but if conditions begin to dry out, this disease will rear its ugly head quickly! Management for summer patch relies heavily on spring and early summer fungicide applications irrigated in post-application. However, deploying fungicides such as propiconazole + azoxystrobin (Compendium or Headway) or pyraclostrobin + fluxapyroxad (Lexicon) now would also help alleviate the disease. Keep an eye out for this root disease on Kentucky bluegrass and creeping bentgrass, as I am already getting suspected reports of it.



Figure 3. Summer patch in Kentucky bluegrass lawn.

Fall Armyworm

Fall armyworm is not a pest to sleep on this time of year. The name “fall” armyworm does not mean that it is not active during Arkansas summers. It can be active in June and July in lawns and pastures throughout the state, so scouting and preventative measures should be considered **now** for this pest ([learn more here](#)). You can scout lawns by looking at the turfgrass canopy for caterpillars with “Y” shapes on their heads (**Figure 4**). Soapy water flushes can also be helpful for agitating fall armyworms in the thatch or lower in the turfgrass canopy and bringing them to the surface ([soapy water flush instructions](#)). Many pyrethroid or diamide insecticides are effective against fall armyworms, but most grasses, such as bermudagrass, recover from fall armyworm damage without any chemical intervention. Management intensity relies on budget and damage tolerance thresholds of the turfgrass manager.



Figure 4. Fall armyworm on tall fescue leaf blade (photo by Mary Hightower).