

Halton Region Master Gardeners

Come Grow With Us



Sweet Woodruff Pests

We wonder if you could help us identify this critter that is destroying our Sweet Woodruff from below the ground. The normally aggressively growing plant is being eaten down underground so it pulls out easily. These beasts remind us of Dipteran larvae. They don't show legs. They don't curl when disturbed. The head end seems opposite the end with the projections. We are in Aldershot (Burlington). The garden was refurbished with "new" soil last season as part of a landscaping job. Here are some pics. They are ½ to ¾ " long and greenish brownish dark colour.

Could you help identify and suggest any actions we might take to control them. By the way, right now the same soil has many immature millipedes.

Thank you, Murray and Christel

Those appear to be European crane fly larvae TIPULA spp.

http://www.fcps.edu/islandcreekes/ecology/crane_fly.htm

(They look similar to black cutworm *Agrotis ipsilon* but they have legs ...

<http://bulletin.ipm.illinois.edu/pastpest/articles/200303b.html>

The maggots in the photo looks to me like the European crane fly, *Tipula paludosa*.

Adults are most active between 8:00 and 11:00 a.m. and between 5:30 p.m. and dusk.

A soapy water drench can be useful to bring the larvae to the surface for collection and disposal. Mix 1-2 tablespoons of liquid dish soap (not detergent) in a gallon of water (more concentrated soap solutions may damage the plants). Irritant solutions are most useful for active insects like leatherjackets (crane flies).

Crane flies thrive in moist soils. This moist cool spring has been ideal and it may be that this severe outbreak will be followed by very little damage in future years. Typically, high pest populations are

followed by the development of parasites, predators ... like centipedes that will increase in number to keep the populations in check and or pathogens.

An adult European crane fly is about an inch long (2.5cm long). They have two-wings and extremely long, fragile legs. The females lay eggs in grass in August-September and the tiny larvae feed for a month or two in the fall and then over winter in the soil. Many are killed by natural enemies like ants and millipedes and winter weather. Those that survive, start feeding again in early spring. They grow to full size by mid-June, then stop feeding for a few weeks and pupate in early July. The adults emerge in late August to September. Different species will have different life-cycles and predators. Proper management really requires proper identification, because timing of treatments is critical. Applications of the nematode *Steinernema feltiae* in the fall when the larvae are tiny and near the surface has been shown to reduce populations of European crane fly.

The thinning of the stand of *Galium* should naturally reduce the population.

Catherine