

Control Fire Ants

News Article for April 22, 2013:

I have been hearing lots of complaints about vegetable gardens that just will not grow. I am pretty sure that the cool spring and particularly the cool nights are the culprit. Warm season plants just will not grow very well when night time temperatures continue to dip. You should see improvement in growth as the temperatures warm up and we head into May.

A downside to warming temperatures is increased fire ant activity. After a wet winter and spring I am seeing lots of ant mounds. Late April and May are the ideal times to treat fire ants. You want them to be active enough to be out actively foraging for food to be effective.

The large fire ant mounds are easy to see and treat but there are lots of small mounds that go unnoticed. This makes it difficult to be successful just treating individual mounds.

The method that has been proven to get the best results is a combination of mound treatment plus a broadcast application of fire ant bait. I do not think that it is a realistic expectation to get rid of every fire ant on your property but it is realistic to manage the population to an acceptable level. Research has proven this combination to obtain 90% control.

There are a number of mound treatments but the ones I personally like are the acephate products. They come in a small can and are applied at a rate of 2 teaspoons of the soluble powder per mound. You can purchase acephate as Acephate 75S or Orthene 75S or Ortho Fire Ant Killer.

The powder is sprinkled over the mound and you do not need to step on the mound or disturb it in any way. If it rains the soluble powder is washed into the mound and if it does not the ants will work the powder into the mound as they come and go.

The mound treatment is easy because you are walking around with a small can and a disposable teaspoon. The baits can be as easy since many of those products are designed for an application rate of 1.5 pounds of bait per acre. These baits are delivered in a small grit that is impregnated with a growth regulator.

The baits are easily applied with a small hand held spreader and you do not have to get total coverage. I would suggest that you apply the bait in swaths about 25 feet apart. Ants will travel 200 feet or more to get a food source. Another advantage to this method of application is that your neighbor's ants will also cross the property line to get the bait and help to cut down on re-infestation. Worker ants will take baits back to the mound to share it with all the other ants.

The growth regulator baits can be purchased as Extinguish, Extinguish Plus, Distance, Logic, Awards and Spectracide Fire Ant Bait. The baits interrupt the ant's ability to reproduce so it will take six weeks to get the full effect.

Be sure to check the weather before applying fire ant baits. You need to apply the baits to a dry lawn and have a window of dry weather for 48 hours after your application. The ants will pick it all up within two days.

If you could get all your neighbors around you to treat at the same time you could be free of ants for a while. Ants swarm every time it rains and will creep back into your lawn from adjoining properties. I would retreat again in October to have the most success.

For information on these or related topics contact Kenny at 225-686-3020 or visit our website at www.lsuagcenter.com/livingston.

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