

The Invincible **Fire Ant!**



Fire Ant Control

Fire ant invasion? Deans can help you keep your cool.

PAGE 1

Irrigation Tips

Are you watering correctly?

PAGE 2

Customer Questions

"When Should I Call About a Lawn Problem?"

PAGE 3

They bite! They sting! They cause billions of dollars of damage every year! For such a tiny insect, they sure cause quite the commotion. So why are fire ants so prevalent and what can we do to help extinguish the fiery little pest?

Well, it's no surprise that fire ants continue to spread across the United States with ease, as just one queen can produce as many as 1,500 eggs per day. And you thought bees had a reputation for being busy!

Their impact on health and safety is no less significant. The fire ant's most important senses are touch and smell. So even a slight disturbance to one of their colonies can trigger the entire colony into attack mode within moments. So, if you don't realize you're standing near an active mound of fire ants...you will soon!

While fire ants bite, this isn't what causes the pain that earned them their fiery namesake. They bite only as a method to anchor themselves so they can sting their victim repeatedly -- a pointed reminder that they belong to the same order as wasps.

Reaction to fire ant stings ranges from a burning sensation to anaphylaxis. Deaths reported from fire ant stings are rare, but over one quarter of all such deaths have occurred in Florida! Fire ants are especially prevalent in areas of new construction and are often the first pest seen inside homes without a pest control program. We've found this to be particularly true in The Villages, where fire ants were already established in the arid tracts of undeveloped pasture.

Their scientific name, *Solenopsis invicta*, is appropriate, as "invicta" is Latin for invincible, or unconquerable, but there are ways to keep these pests from invading your home and lawn.

Sealing gaps and cracks will aid in excluding foraging fire ants, and maintaining a regular home pest program from Deans will reduce their rate of reproduction and ensure they're kept at bay. The fire ant may seem invincible, but we're not giving up the fight any time soon!



Watering Wisely

Watering is one of the most important parts in keeping your lawn green and healthy. It can make or break a beautiful lawn.

So, to help conserve water and keep your lawn looking lush and beautiful it is important that your lawn be watered correctly. Let's take a look at a couple of great lawn watering tips that you can easily implement yourself.

Frequency

How frequently you water your lawn will change depending on the season. During winter for instance, your lawn is able to wait longer between each watering. In contrast, in the summer it's extremely important to keep the lawn hydrated as the Florida sun can quickly dry it out.

Two easy things that you can look for in your own lawn is the color and how the individual blades of grass look. If the color starts to take on a blue-gray tint then that could mean it's time for another

watering. Also, if the individual blades are folded in half lengthwise (vertically) this can also be a sign that your lawn needs to be watered. See the example of the hydrated vs. dehydrated blades in the picture below.

Of course, when considering frequency, you have to account for the natural rainfall we receive here in Florida. On average we get about 50-60 or more inches annually. So, during periods of heavy rainfall it may not be necessary to run irrigation as often.

Amount

While the number of times you may schedule your irrigation varies, the amount of water that you apply each time does not vary. An efficient watering program wets only the turfgrass root zone and does not overly saturate the soil or allow water to run off. Light frequent watering can be inefficient and encourage shallow roots, and excessive over irrigation can increase

the chance of lawn disease and even promote the growth of certain weeds. Usually, $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ inch of water is required to hit the sweet spot.

When to Water

The best time to water is typically in the early morning hours. Watering during the heat of the day can waste large amounts of water due to the evaporation that takes place. Watering in the late afternoon or even later morning can have an adverse effect on a lawn because it can extend the "dew period". Extending this period can potentially accelerate disease occurrence.

Irrigation System

It is also important to regularly check your irrigation system to make sure that it is working properly and covering your entire lawn. You can do this by placing small cans or measuring cups (make sure they have vertical sides) in a straight line from your sprinkler to the edge of the spray zone. Run your irrigation system for about 15 minutes and calculate the average depth of water in your cans or cups.

Multiply this number by four to determine how much water you're applying per hour in each zone. During this test you may find sprinkler heads have become clogged, damaged, are off-center, or even leaking. Each of these issues should be addressed so that your lawn is getting properly irrigated.

Getting a healthy lawn can take time, and often your strategy to get there will change from season to season. Keeping these few tips in mind helps take the guess work out of the process. With a few adjustments, a little hard work, and help from Deans lawn fertilization program, you too can keep your lawn looking green and beautiful all year long!



DEANS Customer Questions

“When Should I Call About a Lawn Problem?”

Gregory Towne, Customer Service Manager

While we encourage you to alert us to serious issues, keep in mind that most minor conditions, like a few stray weeds, are natural and will be addressed with each subsequent treatment.

When it comes to weeds, the *Three Week Guide* works well: Allow three weeks for the last treatment to work, and there’s no need to call if your treatment is due within three weeks. Of course, if you see the number of weeds in your lawn increasing significantly (and it’s been more than three weeks since your last service), give us a call and we’ll address the matter!

Believe it or not, your irrigation system has the greatest impact on the appearance of your lawn.

Overwatering leads to dollarweed and fungus (which is why your system should be paused during rainy periods), and underwatering

leads to drought stress and loss of color.

Always be sure your system is on and watering sufficiently before calling, as this will help us diagnose the problem.

Lastly, keep in mind that many non-pest insects live inside your lawn -- many of which are harmless. Only a few, like chinch bugs, sod webworms, etc., actually damage your turf. This being the case, if grass blades or roots appear to have been chewed it’s certainly important to give us a call.

Florida lawns are susceptible to many different sources of stress from the environment. Proper watering and the occasional notification about serious problems will go a long way toward achieving a lawn we can all be proud of!



Help pinpoint potential lawn issues by ensuring your irrigation system is properly set.

The 3-Week Guide for Weed Notification



1 Week
After Treatment



2 Weeks
After Treatment



3 Weeks
After Treatment



3 Weeks
Before Treatment



2 Weeks
Before Treatment



1 Week
Before Treatment

Weeds begin dying. No need to call.

Tech will arrive soon. No need to call.