

# Ground Pearls Cause Grasses To Die

**Dear Plant Doctor:** I have a centipede grass lawn that has large irregular blotches of dead grass. I fertilize according to extension recommendations and have an in-ground sprinkling system. I have had several landscapers look at my yard and they could find nothing. I recently noticed small red slug-like insects crawling in these bare spots (I have enclosed several). Are these insects causing my centipede grass to die?

**THE PLANT DOCTOR**  
C. BRUCE WILLIAMS  
Extension Area  
Turf Specialist



**Answer:** Yes. The insect you enclosed is the adult female form of the ground pearl (*Margarodes spp.*). Ground pearls were first identified as pests in centipede grass from soil samples sent to N.C. State University from Wilmington in the early 1950s. Ground pearls have been identified as major pests in centipede, St. Augustine, zoysia, and bermuda grasses in most all southeastern states. Damage is unusually severe (large dead patches of grass) on centipede grass that is improperly maintained or subjected to water or nutrient stress.

Very little information is available on the biology of the ground

pearl. We do know the ground pearl females emerge from pearl-like pupal stage in the late spring or early summer. The wingless adult female is about .25 inches long, reddish pink, and has six legs with well developed forelegs and claws.

The insect you sent me is an adult female. The mature male is a gnat-like insect that is exceedingly rare (I have never seen one).

The female lays clusters of pinkish-white eggs two to three inches deep in the soil that are protected by a white-waxy coat.

Slender immature insects called nymphs emerge from the eggs and infest grass roots. After feeding for

a short time, the young insects develop the globular, pearl-like appearance that gives them their name. The nymphs grow and moult five or more times before reaching mature size.

I have read just about all the scientific literature available to me on the ground pearl. This is the summary of information available.

No insecticide, cultural practice or other agronomic technique has been shown to be effective in the long term control of ground pearl.

Good cultural practices, such as watering and fertilization, seem to reduce the severity of the damage and slow the spread of the insect.

The only warm season grasses that ground pearls have not been reported to damage is bahia grass (*Paspalum notatum*) and carpet grass (*Axonopus spp.*).

Some researchers believe that ants influence ground pearl populations but this is not a well documented observation.

If conditions are unfavorable for adult emergence, then nymphs can remain encysted in the pearl stage for several years. Some species of ground pearls can lay dormant up to 17 years before emerging into the adult stage.

If you have ground pearls in your lawn, damage will appear whenever the turf is under severe water stress. You can easily find the pearls later in the summer by closely observing the soil around the roots of living plants.

Nematodes, diseases, or insects can cause symptoms similar to ground pearls. Please take a soil sample to the nearest extension agent for proper identification.

Send your gardening questions to The Plant Doctor P.O. Box 109, Bolivia, N.C. 28422.

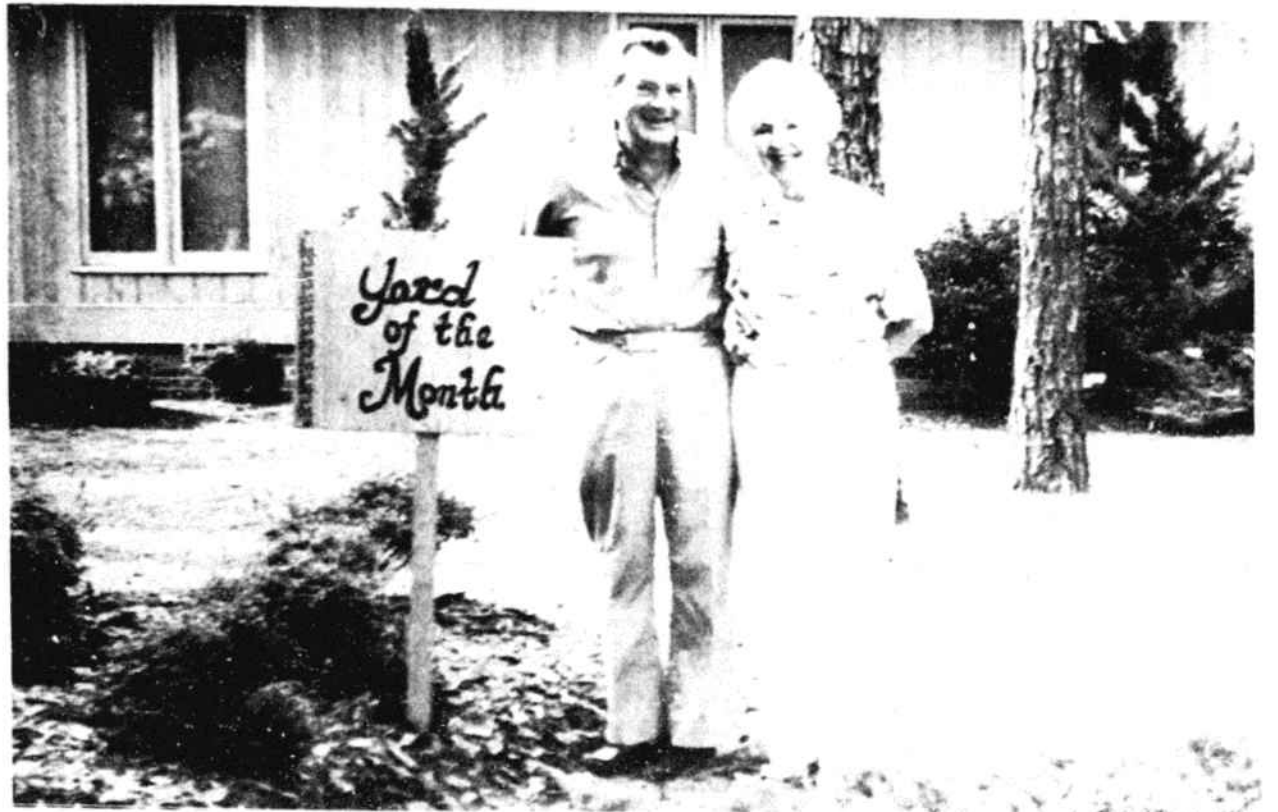
## VFD Serving Fish Or Shrimp

Diners can choose between fried fish or boiled shrimp Saturday, July 13, at the Shallotte Point Volunteer Fire Department.

Plates will cost \$4 each, said Joyce Land, spokesman, and will be available starting at 11 a.m. Each plate will also include baked beans, coleslaw and hushpuppies.

A bake sale is planned in conjunction with the dinner.

All proceeds will benefit the department, she said.



## Green, But No Grass

A lawn mulched in pine straw requires minimum care while providing a picturesque setting for the home of Dan and Mary Alfieri, 2 Moss Court, Carolina Shores, Calabash. In choosing the site as its July Yard of the Month, Carolina Shores Garden Club praised creative plantings that feature a variety of shrubs, trees and seasonal flowers and establish a visually green area without grass maintenance.



MR. AND MRS. SIDNEY R. RHODES  
...Theresa Marie Hewett

# Hewett, Rhodes Exchange Vows

Theresa Marie Hewett and Sidney R. Rhodes were married on Saturday, June 22 at 2 p.m. in the Holden Beach Chapel, Holden Beach.

The Rev. Curtis Coleman performed the ceremony.

The bride was escorted by her son, David Wayne Hewett.

Jennifer Lynn Hewett, daughter of the bride, served as maid of honor. Pamela Galloway served as a bridesmaid. Jessica Rhodes was flower girl.

Lloyd Wayne Rhodes was best

man. Groomsman was David Rhodes.

Music was provided by Margie Candler, pianist. Anna Varnam, soloist, sang *We Have Only Just Begun*, *The Rose* and *Wind Beneath My Wings*.

Jeanette Sabiston attended the register. The wedding was directed by Linda Bazen.

A reception was held at the Lockwood Folly Community Building.

After a honeymoon trip, the couple will reside in Holden Beach.

## Craft Classes Slated By Calabash Ladies Auxiliary

The Ladies Auxiliary of Calabash Elks Lodge No. 2679 is conducting craft classes at the lodge at Traders Village.

On July 9 and July 16, paper vegetables will be made. Cost is \$12 to participants.

On July 23 and July 30, stuffy

bows and baskets will be created. The cost is \$12.

Petal porcelain will be made on August 6, 13 and 20. The cost is \$15.

The classes benefit the His 'N' Her Crafts Fair in the fall, a major fundraising event of the auxiliary for its community service projects.

## Bolivia VFD Slates Dinner

The auxiliary to Bolivia Volunteer Fire Department will hold a chicken and ham dinner on Monday, July 29, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the fire station.

Plates will cost \$3.50 each. Proceeds will help support the department's operations.

The fire station is located on Green Lewis Road.

## Give Blood Today At Local Hospital

The American Red Cross aims to collect 50 usable pints of blood at a bloodmobile stop today (Thursday) at The Brunswick Hospital in Supply from 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Daphne Yarbrough, director of marketing for the hospital, said the drive is intended to help maintain the region's blood supply. Demand continues and may even increase during the summer holidays, a time when regular donors often are not as available.

Potential donors can contact Ms. Yarbrough's office at 754-8121 for an appointment, or simply walk in.

"Making an appointment will shorten the wait," she said. "The most time-consuming aspect of giving blood is the paperwork you have to fill out."

Donors should be 17 to 76 years of age, weigh at least 110 pounds and be in good health. They should not have been exposed to AIDS or have had cancer, heart disease or hepatitis.



## Marriage Announced

Pauline Hawes Inman and A. L. (Andy) Andrews, both of Shallotte, were married Saturday, June 29, in a private ceremony attended by their immediate families.

Hope my #1 Man has a fantastic birthday. Love, Barbara

No wonder there's such warmth behind the thanks this brings your way— Your special kindness really made the day. And when anyone does the thoughtful things you do, It's hard to find words to thank each one of you! Willie & Joyce Fulford

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