If you’ve had them before, chances are that you’ll have them again. Yes, grubs will soon be back, infesting lawns throughout your neighborhood and doing their best to ruin otherwise beautiful turf from the roots up.

The Sneakiest Pests Around
Perhaps the most frustrating thing about grubs is that they feed underground and out of sight. Since they stay underground, the damage they’re doing often isn’t discovered until it’s too late. What’s worse, they usually pick the most lush lawns to feed on.

These destructive beetle larvae are generally off-white with brown heads, and they’re known for the “C” position they assume when disturbed. They come from several types of beetles, including Japanese and June beetles, which begin laying their eggs in lawns in early summer. Upon hatching, the tiny grubs feed on grass roots until cool weather arrives. They then overwinter underground and resume feeding activity again when warmer weather returns.

Lawns that have been infested by grubs often feel spongy when walked on, and irregular brown patches may be visible. Once roots are destroyed, sod can easily be rolled up like a loose carpet. For a firm diagnosis, it’s necessary to pull up a small section of sod. If more than six grubs can be seen per square foot, treatment will be necessary.

Properly Timed Treatments Are Essential
Imidacloprid (brand name Merit®) is the best way to control grubs. This systemic insecticide is applied to the soil and taken up by the grass roots, killing grubs as they feed on them. Imidacloprid is 90% to 95% effective when applied at the right time of year.

For the best results, imidacloprid should usually be applied before August 15 (while beetles are still laying their eggs). This will provide your lawn with excellent protection against harmful grubs for the entire growing season.
Beating the Heat with Outdoor Cool Spots

Hot summer temperatures can make being outdoors a less than enjoyable experience. But with a little imagination and planning, your yard can be transformed into a cool, comfortable retreat from the heat.

Landscaping for Summer Comfort

All of the plants in your landscape are capable of absorbing heat and cooling the air. The trick is to make sure that your outdoor relaxation or entertainment areas are surrounded by plant life. Shade trees are great for blocking or filtering direct sunlight, and grass acts as a natural outdoor air conditioner.

If you have a deck or patio on your property, you may want to consider adding an overhead trellis or awning to filter the sun and support hanging flower baskets.

Treat Yourself to a Water Feature

Water has soothing, cooling effects no matter what form it takes, and a water feature can be added to your property at surprisingly little cost. Preformed plastic pond shells are available in a variety of shapes and sizes. Or, a hole can be dug in your landscape, then lined with sand and a heavy plastic pool liner. Once installed, you may want to add fish; a small, submersible pump to create a fountain or waterfall; or water plants such as lilies.

If you’ll be using your outdoor cool spots for nighttime entertaining, be sure to include lighting features for added ambiance. Low-voltage lighting systems are an easy way to light up your nights cost effectively. Plus, citronella candles or torches can be used to keep pesky mosquitoes away while adding a pleasing glow to your property.

When it comes to beating the heat this summer, the possibilities for your landscape are many. Have fun, and don’t be afraid to experiment!

What’s for dinner?

The One and Only Beer Chicken

1 12-oz. can beer
1 whole chicken (3-4 lbs.)

Your favorite poultry grill rub

Wash the chicken inside and out and pat dry. Open the beer can and create several additional openings in the top of the can (or use a ceramic holder like the one shown).

Use a commercial rub or make your own. To make your own, start with ⅛ cup brown sugar and add any combination of the following to your liking: coarse black pepper, paprika, garlic powder, onion powder, coarse salt, celery seed or red pepper. You can also vary the flavor by adding either rosemary, oregano or cumin. Rub the chicken down with the spices (inside and out) and place the bird on the beer can so that it stands upright (like a tripod).

Set up your grill for indirect grilling, keeping coals to the sides and using aluminum foil or some other kind of drip pan in the center. Soak some apple or hickory chips in a beer and water mixture. When your grill is ready for cooking, toss in all the wood chips and place the chicken in the center of the grate. Cook covered until golden brown and the internal temperature of the meat reaches 180° F (about 1½ to 1¾ hours). Add more coals after an hour if needed.

Remove upright and let rest 5 minutes before serving. You and your guests will enjoy a very tasty and moist meal!
Weeds Pushing You Over the Edge?

Have you ever noticed that weeds are often worse along the edges of streets, sidewalks and driveways? It all comes down to the fact that weeds can thrive in conditions that are bad for healthy lawn growth. For example:

- Foot traffic is usually heaviest along driveway and curb areas. This causes soil to become compacted, which is great for weed growth but not for lawns.
- Road salt, carbon monoxide and other exhaust fumes can make the soil along your driveway more toxic to healthy grass.
- Watering often misses the very edges of your lawn. These areas actually need more water than the rest of your lawn, not less.

Lawn edges are often cut too short with string trimmers and mowers, making these spots not only the hardest, hottest and driest, but also the thinnest parts of your lawn.

So What’s the Solution?
The best way to keep the edges of your lawn weed-free is to treat these areas with heavier doses of pre-emergent and post-emergent herbicides. Twice the usual amount of aeration and overseeding with a drought-resistant grass variety can also be helpful. Finally, careful mowing and trimming along with deep, regular watering will further encourage healthy grass growth. This will discourage unwelcome weed invaders.

Easy to Care for, Easy to Love

With perennials, you get the greatest reward for the least amount of care! Perennials offer you flexibility and durability, and they can survive in your landscape for three or more years. Plus, due to their increasing popularity, there are now hundreds of varieties available for planting (depending on the time of year).

If you’re interested in adding color to your landscape without having to worry about a lot of annual replanting, perennials are the perfect solution. Whether you’re interested in a formal or informal arrangement, or plants that grow short or tall, there’s a perennial design to meet your specific needs.

There are some important things to consider when planning your perennial garden. First of all, is your site shady or sunny? You’ll want to make sure that the perennials you choose are the best suited to the conditions of your garden.

And what about color? Keep in mind that greens, blues and violets are cool colors that recede. On the other hand, reds, yellows and oranges are warm and will create a dramatic effect.

Heights and forms vary widely among perennials, in addition to plant texture and blooming season. All of these elements should be taken into account before you begin planting.

It’s Hot, and They’re Hungry!

Hotter weather acts as a dinner bell of sorts, calling hungry surface-feeding insects to feast on your lawn every summer. Billbugs, webworms, greenbug aphids and chinch bugs can all do real damage to your lawn if action isn’t taken.

As a rule, healthier lawns are less prone to serious insect damage. You can help your lawn to stand up to surface-feeding insect pests by maintaining a regular fertilization program, watering regularly (your lawn needs from 1” to 1½” of water per week), and mowing properly (remove no more than ⅓ of the grass blade each time you mow).

If your lawn is kept healthy, there will be less risk of mistaking insect damage for hot-weather dormancy. Insect problems usually present themselves in the form of damaged, torn-up or browning turf.

Regular inspections of your lawn are important, since treatments work much better when an insect problem is detected early. If you notice signs of insects in your lawn, prompt action will be needed to prevent excessive damage from occurring.
Summer Lawn Seeding? You May Want to Wait.

Lawn seeding success is largely dependent on the weather, and fall is generally the best time to do it. That’s because there are a few things working against summer seeding and establishment.

The first is higher soil temperatures. While warmer soil is generally good for seed germination, it impedes root growth and the development of seedlings. In addition, longer days with more sunlight and higher air temperatures can cause quick evaporation of moisture from the seed bed.

If you do decide to go ahead with summer lawn seeding, frequent irrigation will be very important (this can be a problem if drought conditions lead to watering restrictions in your area).

For best results, you’ll need to water early in the morning (before 9 a.m.) and again in the afternoon between 2 p.m. and 4 p.m. to prevent drying.

If you foresee problems with providing consistent, timely irrigation this summer, you’ll probably be better off waiting until fall arrives to seed your lawn.

All-American Winners!

All-America Selections Winners will look great in any garden and are selected by a network of independent judges who rated their garden performance as superior. Here are two of the 2006 winners that you might want to try in your landscape!

**Flowering Tobacco ‘Perfume Deep Purple’** – A delicate evening fragrance with a unique deep purple flower color. Single, 2”, star-shaped flowers. Easy to grow, and adapts well to containers or a semi-shade garden planting.

**Zinnia ‘Zowie! Yellow Flame’** – Each 3” to 4” semi-double bloom has a scarlet/rose center with yellow petal edges. Great for large containers, and perfect for cut flowers. Works very well as a focal point or mixed with other annuals for a “hot” color combination.