

Spittlebugs
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What are these brownish-black insects with orange stripes hopping all over my lawn? Spittlebugs are about 3/8 inches long, dark brown or black with two orange stripes on each wing. They hop readily and fly. You can see them as you walk over or mow your grass. The young are ivory with a black head and live in a frothy mass of spittle on the grass.

Adult spittlebugs feed on certain types of holly. The young spittlebugs attack lawns. Young spittlebugs prefer centipede lawns and feed on the grass making it look yellow or “washed out”. Affected leaf blades will often have yellow, white or red streaks on them.

Do not treat lawns for spittlebugs until you see injury. Centipede lawns can withstand a good bit of damage without being permanently affected. I seldom recommend treating for spittlebugs. Control them using cultural practices.

Thick, thatchy, over watered lawns may be more prone to spittlebugs. Do not water too often. Wait until the lawn dries to water it. Water when the grass blades begin to turn grey, wilt and roll up. Apply three-quarter inches of water each time. This should wet the soil to a depth of 8 to 12 inches. You should water no more often than once every five to seven days.

Mow centipede lawns at one to one and one-half inches tall. If you mow higher than this, centipede lawns can get thatchy. Thatchy lawns can have more pest problems and they may die in the winter. Lawns with thatch layers thicker than one half inch are at risk. Thatchy lawns often feel thick or spongy.