Japanese Beetle Grubs (Turf)

*(Larvae of **Popillia japonica**)*
Japanese beetle grubs are **root-feeding white grubs** that cause **severe turf damage**, especially in irrigated Colorado lawns. They are similar to other white grubs but tend to be **more aggressive**, more numerous, and more destructive. Damage appears **late summer through fall** and often requires **preventive treatment** in areas with known infestations.

Seasonal Activity Calendar

Icons: 🌸 Spring | 🌞 Summer | 🍂 Fall | ❄️ Winter

Stage / Damage	Type	Active Season	Icons
Adult beetles active	Insect	Early–Mid Summer	🌞
Egg-laying in turf	Insect	Mid Summer	🌞
Grub feeding (MAIN DAMAGE)	Insect	Late Summer–Fall	🌞🍂
Overwintering larvae	Insect	Winter	❄️
Light spring feeding	Insect	Spring	🌸

Symptoms (Homeowner-Friendly)

Visible Turf Damage

Symptom	Description
Brown, irregular dead patches	Grass dries out and dies quickly
Turf pulls back easily like carpet	Roots are eaten away
Spongy feel underfoot	Root loss loosens the soil-turf connection
Increased wildlife digging	Skunks, raccoons, and birds feeding on grubs
Poor response to watering	Turf cannot recover because roots are gone

What the Grubs Look Like

- "C-shaped" white larvae
- ¾" long when mature (larger than chafer grubs)
- Brown head capsule
- Raster pattern (hair pattern) unique to Japanese beetles

Primary Causes (Colorado Conditions)

- Irrigated lawns (beetles prefer moist soils for egg-laying)
- Dense, lush turfgrass
- Frequent watering during summer
- Shallow-rooted, stressed, or thatch-heavy lawns
- High Japanese beetle populations in many Front Range neighborhoods

Treatment & Management

1. Preventive Control (BEST METHOD)

Apply **June–early July**, before eggs hatch.

Product Class	Notes
Acelepryn (chlorantraniliprole)	One of the best preventives; long-lasting, low toxicity
Neonicotinoids (imidacloprid, clothianidin)	Highly effective on newly hatched grubs
Combination grub products	Provide broad control across species

Preventive applications stop damage **before it happens**.

---

2. Curative Treatments (For Active Grub Damage)

Use **late August–October** when larvae are still small enough to control.

Product Class	Notes
Carbaryl (Sevin)	Effective, fast-acting
Trichlorfon	"Rescue" treatment for severe infestations
Must be watered in thoroughly	Needed to move product into root zone

Curatives stop additional feeding but **cannot repair dead turf**.

---

3. Lawn Recovery After Grub Damage

- Rake out dead material

- Deep water to encourage surviving roots
- Overseed thin areas (best with tall fescue for its deeper rooting)
- Lay sod if patches are large or severely destroyed
- Add compost to help soil recovery

When to Worry vs. When It's Cosmetic

🔴 **When to Worry (action recommended)**

- **5–10+ grubs per sq. ft.** (treatment threshold)
- Large brown patches spreading late summer
- Turf lifts off soil easily
- Heavy wildlife digging
- Repeated infestations year after year
- Preventive treatments skipped in known high-pressure areas

These require **immediate curative treatment + overseeding**.

🟢 **Mostly Cosmetic (monitor only)**

- A few grubs found (1–3 per sq. ft.)
- No expanding patches
- Turf holds firm when pulled
- Symptoms improve with irrigation adjustments
- Grubs declining after early frost

Not all Japanese beetle grubs cause damage—**only high populations** lead to turf death.