

November 19, 2020 Update

## Virus Symptoms

- Yellow, elongated spots on leaves
- Dead, elongated spots on leaves
- Unhealthy yellowish or bronzish tinge and/or dead lawn
- Often excessive weeds

## How It Spreads

- Infected grass sap on mower tires
- Planting infested sod or sprigs
- Possibly aphids

## Mower Sanitizers

Blow clippings off mower, line trimmers & tires then spray until wet (& allow to dry) with:

- DuPont **Virkon S** - mix a 2% solution
- 1 part household **bleach** & 9 parts water. Caution: bleach rusts steel.
- Note: Many other disinfectants were tested by UF, but only the 2 listed above destroyed 100% of viruses



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## Lethal Viral Necrosis (LVN) in Palm Beach County

Lethal viral necrosis, also called sugarcane mosaic virus was found in 2014 in western Boynton Beach and Wellington, Florida. It is now widespread throughout Palm Beach and a few other Florida counties. The first confirmation of the disease in Florida



*LVN induced streaking on leaf  
Photo: UF Schall*

occurred on the southern tip of St. Petersburg, in the Tampa Bay area. It has not spread very much in that area, unlike the more aggressive spread in Palm Beach County. The name of the disease denotes that it is "lethal" and kills Floratam

## What Can You Do?

No pesticide (fungicides, insecticides, vaccines, etc.) cure LVN in Floratam. The virus cannot be transmitted via soil. Living tissue, or moist plant sap must be involved. Management includes;

- Sanitize mowing equipment after LVN infected turf is cut.
- If possible, avoid mowing when the grass is wet. Water keeps the plant sap moist longer.
- Promote the healthiest growth possible with best management practices for

cultivar (cultivated variety) of St. Augustinegrass. Generally this occurs within 3 years of symptoms being spotted.

Symptoms are most visible during the fall and winter months, sometimes starting as early as September when lawns are growing less vigorously. Active turf growth in the summer may mask symptoms during the year or two after infection.

Floratam cultivar of St. Augustinegrass was introduced in the 1970's to resist another turf virus called St. Augustinegrass decline virus. Floratam became the most popular cultivar of St. Augustinegrass in Florida due to its superior characteristics. Currently, **Palmetto** is the most widely recommend St. Augustinegrass replacement cultivar for Palm Beach County. We hope that **CitriBlue** cultivar research will be completed soon, so that it can

also be recommended. Bitterblue is no longer recommended due to uncertainty about which cultivars are actually contained in that selection. Several other St. Augustine grass cultivars have also tested as resistant to the virus, but may be more appropriate for other areas of the state. LVN also infects, but does not kill Bermudagrass, paspalum, bahiagrass, and other commercially available St. Augustinegrass varieties. Zoysiagrass is not infected by the virus, but has its own fungal and insect management issues.

Lethal viral necrosis weakens Floratam so that other problems like Take-all fungal root rot and weeds often occur.

Avoidance and planting resistant turf species or St. Augustinegrass cultivars are the primary management options.

fertilization, watering, mowing height (3.5 - 4 inches) and fungal management. See <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/Ih010>

- Re-sod, sprig or plug with recommended varieties to



*SCMV induced yellowish, off color lawn and weeds  
Photo: UF Schall*

replace dying Floratam.

- If desired, overseed in the winter with annual or perennial ryegrass, or colorize with turf dye when the Floratam may look its worst.

For additional information, contact the Palm Beach County Master Gardener Hotline at 561.233.1750 or email [mgardenfwd@pbcgov.org](mailto:mgardenfwd@pbcgov.org)

Check out Phil Harmon, PhD's publication at: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pp313>

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