NEW BRUNSWICK LANDSCAPING

Troubleshooting

Diagnosing lawn problems, pest damage, disease identification, and landscape repair in NB

15 Expert Answers from Landscape IQ

newbrunswicklandscaping.com/construction-brain

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Q1

Common tree pests in NB and how to spot them?

New Brunswick's trees face several common pests that can cause significant damage if not caught early. The Maritime climate's high humidity and temperature fluctuations create ideal conditions for many insects and diseases, making regular monitoring essential for tree health.

Spruce budworm is arguably the most destructive pest in New Brunswick, particularly affecting balsam fir and white spruce. Look for reddish-brown caterpillars feeding on new growth in late spring, causing needles to turn brown and drop. Heavy infestations create a scorched appearance across entire tree crowns. The damage typically starts at the top of trees and works downward over several years.

Eastern tent caterpillars create distinctive silk tents in the crotches of deciduous trees, especially wild cherry, apple, and maple trees. These appear in early spring as small webs that grow larger as caterpillars mature. The hairy caterpillars emerge to feed on leaves during the day, returning to their tents at night. While unsightly, they rarely kill healthy trees but can weaken stressed ones.

Emerald ash borer has been detected in New Brunswick and poses a serious threat to all ash species. Early signs include D-shaped exit holes in the bark (about 3-4mm wide), S-shaped galleries under the bark, and crown dieback starting from the top. Woodpecker damage on the trunk often indicates borer activity underneath. This pest is fatal to ash trees and spreads rapidly.

Winter moth caterpillars emerge in early spring to feed on budding leaves of maple, oak, elm, and fruit trees. Look for small green caterpillars that drop on silk threads when disturbed. Heavy infestations can completely defoliate trees by late May. The damage appears as holes in leaves or completely eaten leaf tissue, leaving only the main veins.

Forest tent caterpillars differ from eastern tent caterpillars by not building tents. Instead, they create silk mats on tree trunks and branches where they rest. These blue caterpillars with white keyhole-shaped spots prefer aspen, birch, and maple. They can completely defoliate large areas of forest, though most trees recover if healthy.

Scale insects appear as small, waxy bumps on branches and needles of evergreens, particularly spruce and pine. Heavy infestations cause needle yellowing, branch dieback, and overall tree decline. Look for sticky honeydew on needles and branches, which often develops black sooty mold.

Early detection is crucial because most tree pests are easier and less expensive to control when caught early. Walk around your trees monthly during the growing season, looking for unusual discoloration, holes in leaves, webbing, or small insects. Pay special attention to new growth and the undersides of leaves where many pests hide.

For large or valuable trees, hire a certified arborist for proper diagnosis and treatment. Many pest problems require specific timing for effective control, and misidentification can lead to ineffective treatments. Professional arborists can also assess whether a tree is worth treating or should be removed to prevent spread to healthy trees.

Need help finding a qualified arborist or tree care professional? New Brunswick Landscaping can match you with certified tree care specialists in your area for proper pest identification and treatment recommendations.

Q2

Why is my newly laid sod turning brown in New Brunswick?

Newly laid sod turning brown in New Brunswick is most often caused by insufficient watering during the critical root establishment period, though poor soil contact, heat stress, and improper installation timing can also be factors. Sod is essentially a living plant with its root system severed, and it needs consistent moisture to survive while new roots grow into your existing soil — a process that takes 2-4 weeks in NB's climate.

The most common mistake is underwatering during the first 14 days. New sod in New Brunswick needs to be watered **at least twice daily** — morning and late afternoon — for the first two weeks, keeping the soil beneath the sod moist to a depth of 3-4 inches. In the warmer Moncton or Saint John coastal areas (Zone 5a-5b), summer temperatures can dry out sod faster than you expect, requiring up to three waterings per day during heat waves. After the first two weeks, gradually reduce to once daily, then every other day by week four.

Poor soil-to-sod contact is another frequent culprit. If the ground wasn't properly graded and lightly rolled after laying, air pockets form between the sod and soil, preventing roots from reaching moisture. You can check this by lifting a corner of the sod — if it pulls up easily with no visible white root hairs after 10 days, the sod isn't making contact. Gently pressing down on these areas and watering deeply can sometimes save the situation.

Installation timing matters significantly in New Brunswick. The ideal windows are mid-May through June and September through early October, when temperatures are moderate (15-22°C) and rainfall is more reliable. Sod laid during July and August heat faces much higher stress — if you must install in summer, choose a cloudy stretch if possible and be prepared for intensive watering. Avoid laying sod after mid-October, as the root system won't establish before NB's first frost arrives in late September to mid-October.

Other causes to investigate include laying sod over heavily compacted soil (common in new construction in Fredericton subdivisions), which prevents drainage and root penetration, or placing sod over existing dead grass without proper removal. If only the edges of each sod piece are browning, the pieces likely shrank from dehydration and exposed edges dried out first. **If large sections remain brown after 3-4 weeks of proper watering**, the sod

may have been sitting on a pallet too long before installation — sod should be laid within 24-48 hours of harvest. At that point, consider contacting your sod supplier about replacement or consult a local landscaping professional for a soil assessment.

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Q3

How do I identify and treat grub damage in a New Brunswick lawn?

Grub damage in New Brunswick lawns typically appears as irregularly-shaped brown patches that feel spongy underfoot and can be peeled back like a carpet, revealing white C-shaped larvae feeding on grass roots just below the surface. The most common culprits in NB are European chafer grubs and June beetle larvae, which are most active from late August through October and again briefly in spring before pupating.

To confirm grub damage, cut a 1-square-foot section of affected turf about 3 inches deep and fold it back. If you count **more than 5-8 grubs per square foot**, treatment is warranted. Fewer than 5 is generally tolerable and your lawn can recover on its own. You may also notice increased activity from skunks, crows, or raccoons digging in your lawn — these animals feed on grubs and their foraging can cause as much damage as the grubs themselves.

Treatment timing is critical in New Brunswick. The most effective window for grub control is late August through mid-September when grubs are small and feeding near the soil surface. By October, NB grubs move deeper into the soil to overwinter below the frost line (1.2-1.5 metres deep), making them nearly impossible to reach with surface treatments. The biological control **nematodes (Heterorhabditis bacteriophora)** are the preferred NB option since the province restricts cosmetic pesticide use — apply them in early September when soil temperatures are above 15°C and keep the lawn moist for 2 weeks after application.

For preventive control, **consider applying nematodes annually in late August** if your neighbourhood has a history of grub problems. A single application costs approximately $50-80 for a typical NB residential lawn (3,000-5,000 square feet) if you do it yourself, or $100-300 for professional treatment. Nematodes must be stored in the refrigerator and applied in the evening or on a cloudy day, as UV light kills them quickly.

To repair grub-damaged areas, rake out the dead grass, loosen the top inch of soil, apply a quality grass seed blend (60% Kentucky Bluegrass, 20% Fine Fescue, 20% Perennial Ryegrass), and keep the area moist until germination — typically 10-21 days in NB's fall conditions. If damage is extensive, professional overseeding at $100-200 per 1,000 square feet may be more efficient than patching by hand.

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Q4

What causes white fungus patches on my NB lawn every spring?

Those white or greyish-pink fuzzy patches appearing on your New Brunswick lawn in early spring are almost certainly snow mold, a fungal disease that develops under snow cover during the long Maritime winter. NB is particularly susceptible because of the combination of prolonged snow cover, fluctuating freeze-thaw cycles, and high humidity — conditions that create an ideal breeding ground for these fungi.

There are two common types in New Brunswick. **Grey snow mold (Typhula spp.)** produces circular patches 6-24 inches in diameter with a grey-white matted appearance, and is the most common variety across the province. **Pink snow mold (Microdochium nivale)** creates similar patches but with a pinkish hue around the edges and can actually occur even without snow cover during cool, wet conditions — making it common in the rainy springs typical of Saint John and the Fundy coast. Grey snow mold rarely kills grass crowns and lawns usually recover fully, while pink snow mold can be more damaging if left unchecked.

The good news is that **most NB lawns recover from snow mold on their own within 3-4 weeks** once temperatures warm and the grass begins actively growing. To speed recovery, gently rake the affected areas with a leaf rake as soon as the snow melts to break up the matted fungal growth and improve air circulation. This simple step can dramatically accelerate healing by allowing sunlight and air to reach the grass crowns. Avoid heavy foot traffic on affected areas while the lawn is still wet and soft from snowmelt.

Prevention is far more effective than treatment. In fall, continue mowing your NB lawn until growth stops entirely — usually mid-to-late October in Fredericton and early November in milder coastal areas. Your final mowing height should be 2-2.5 inches, shorter than your summer height of 3-3.5 inches, because tall grass folds over under snow and creates a moist environment where fungi thrive. Avoid applying nitrogen fertilizer after mid-September, as lush late-season growth is highly susceptible to snow mold. Also rake up all fallen leaves before snow arrives, since leaf layers trap moisture against the grass.

For lawns with chronic snow mold problems, consider improving drainage in low-lying areas where snow accumulates, reducing thatch buildup through core aeration in early fall ($100-250 for a typical NB lawn), and overseeding with more resistant grass varieties like perennial ryegrass. If snow mold damage is severe and large patches fail to recover by mid-June, overseed those areas and keep them moist — or consult a lawn care professional for a targeted fungicide application.

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Q5

How do I fix severely compacted soil under a New Brunswick lawn?

Severely compacted soil is one of the most common lawn problems in New Brunswick, especially in newer developments around Moncton, Fredericton, and Saint John where heavy construction equipment has compressed the subsoil into a nearly impenetrable layer. Compacted soil prevents water infiltration, restricts root growth, and reduces oxygen availability — resulting in thin, stressed turf that struggles through NB's hot summers and cold winters alike.

The most effective immediate remedy is **core aeration**, which uses a machine to pull 2-3 inch plugs of soil out of the ground, creating channels for air, water, and roots to penetrate. For severely compacted NB lawns, a single pass is rarely enough — plan on aerating in a crosshatch pattern (two passes at right angles) and repeating every spring and fall for 2-3 years until soil structure improves. The ideal timing in New Brunswick is early September (primary) and again in mid-May after the ground has fully thawed and dried enough to work. Rental of a core aerator costs $50-100 per day from equipment rental shops in Fredericton or Moncton, or professional aeration runs $100-250 for an average residential lawn.

After aerating, topdress with a 1/4 to 1/2 inch layer of quality compost, working it into the aeration holes with the back of a rake. This introduces organic matter into the compacted zone and feeds beneficial soil organisms that naturally loosen soil structure over time. New Brunswick's naturally acidic soils (pH 4.5-6.0) benefit enormously from compost, which helps buffer pH while improving drainage in the heavy clay soils common in river valley areas like the Saint John and Miramichi valleys.

For extreme compaction — such as former parking areas, driveways, or heavy equipment staging zones — aeration alone may not be sufficient. In these cases, consider deep tilling the top 6-8 inches of soil, incorporating 3-4 inches of compost, and re-establishing the lawn from scratch with a proper seed blend suited to your NB hardiness zone. This is more disruptive but creates lasting results. Another long-term strategy is overseeding with

deep-rooted grass varieties and white clover, which naturally breaks up compacted soil with its root system and fixes nitrogen.

Ongoing prevention is essential. Avoid walking or driving on your lawn when the soil is wet — particularly during NB's spring thaw in March and April when the ground is saturated. Establish designated pathways with stepping stones or mulch paths. Leave grass clippings on the lawn to build organic matter, and consider an annual topdressing of compost each fall. If compaction persists despite your efforts, a professional landscaper can assess whether subsurface drainage issues or soil composition require more intensive remediation.

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Q6

Why are my cedar hedges turning brown in New Brunswick?

Cedar hedges turning brown in New Brunswick is extremely common and usually results from winter desiccation — a condition where cold, dry winter winds draw moisture from the foliage faster than frozen roots can replace it. This is the number one cause of cedar browning across the province, particularly on the south and southwest-facing sides of hedges that receive the most wind and winter sun exposure. The damage typically appears in late February through April as brown, dry patches on the outer foliage.

Winter desiccation is especially severe in New Brunswick because of the Maritime province's combination of harsh winter winds, bright sun reflecting off snow, and deeply frozen ground that prevents roots from absorbing replacement moisture. Inland areas like Fredericton and Woodstock (Zone 4a-4b) experience this more intensely than milder coastal areas. **To prevent it, water your cedars thoroughly in late October and early November** before the ground freezes — fully hydrated cedars are far more resistant. Wrapping hedges in burlap (not plastic) on the windward side provides a physical wind barrier, and anti-desiccant sprays applied in November can reduce

moisture loss by up to 30%.

Spider mites are the second most common cause of cedar browning in NB, particularly during hot, dry summers. These tiny pests suck moisture from foliage, causing a stippled yellow-brown discoloration that progresses from the interior outward. To test for them, hold a white piece of paper under a branch and shake it vigorously — tiny moving dots confirm their presence. A strong blast from a garden hose every few days can control minor infestations, while horticultural oil sprays are effective for heavier populations.

Root rot from poor drainage is another frequent issue, especially in NB's clay-heavy river valley soils. Cedars need well-drained soil and will develop brown, dying sections if their roots sit in standing water. This is common in low-lying areas of Moncton subdivisions and along the Saint John River valley. If the browning is concentrated at the base and the wood feels soft or spongy, root rot is likely the cause — improving drainage with French drains or regrading may be necessary.

Other causes include **salt spray damage** (browning on the road-facing side of hedges, common along NB's salted winter roads), cedar leaf miner insects (tiny tunnels visible in affected foliage), and natural interior needle drop in fall, which is normal and not a concern. If browning is limited to under one-third of the hedge, cedars usually recover with proper watering and fertilization in spring. However, if entire branches are brown and brittle with no green growth remaining, those sections will not recover and should be pruned out. For hedges with extensive damage, consult a certified arborist ($150-400 for an assessment) to determine the underlying cause and best treatment plan.

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Q7

How do I treat powdery mildew on plants in NB's humid climate?

Powdery mildew appears as a white or grey powdery coating on leaves and stems, and it thrives in New Brunswick's humid Maritime climate, particularly during the warm, humid days and cool nights typical of July through September. While rarely fatal to established plants, powdery mildew weakens growth, reduces flowering, and makes your garden look unsightly. Common NB targets include lilacs, bee balm, phlox, roses, cucumbers, squash, and zucchini.

Unlike most fungal diseases, powdery mildew actually spreads fastest in **warm, dry conditions with high humidity** — not during rain. This is why NB gardens often see outbreaks during those stretches of warm days (20-28°C) with cool, damp nights and morning fog common along the Fundy coast and in river valley areas around Fredericton. Poor air circulation and crowded plantings make the problem significantly worse because they trap humid air around foliage.

For immediate treatment, a simple homemade spray of 1 tablespoon baking soda, 1/2 teaspoon liquid dish soap, and 1 gallon of water can slow the spread when applied weekly to affected and surrounding plants. Spray in the morning so foliage dries during the day. Neem oil sprays (available at garden centres across NB for $12-20) are another effective organic option — apply every 7-14 days at the first sign of infection. For severe outbreaks, potassium bicarbonate fungicides provide stronger control and are approved for use in NB under the province's cosmetic pesticide restrictions.

Prevention is far more effective than treatment in New Brunswick's consistently humid environment. Space plants according to their mature size to ensure good air circulation — this is the single most impactful step you can take. When planting susceptible species like phlox or bee balm, choose mildew-resistant cultivars such as Phlox paniculata 'David' or Monarda 'Jacob Cline,' which are widely available at NB nurseries and perform well in Zones 4-5. Water at the base of plants rather than overhead, and water in the morning so any splashed foliage dries quickly.

Pruning for airflow is critical in NB gardens. Thin dense shrubs and perennial clumps in early spring to improve air movement through the canopy. For chronically affected perennials, cut stems back by one-third in late June — this delays flowering slightly but produces sturdier, more disease-resistant growth. Remove and dispose of all affected plant debris in fall rather than composting it, as powdery mildew spores can overwinter on dead plant material. If powdery mildew consistently devastates certain plants despite your best efforts, consider replacing them with resistant alternatives better suited to NB's humid Maritime conditions.

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Q8

Why are mushrooms growing in my New Brunswick lawn?

Mushrooms appearing in your New Brunswick lawn are actually a sign of healthy soil biology — they are the fruiting bodies of beneficial fungi that are actively decomposing buried organic matter such as old tree roots, construction lumber, or buried stumps. While they may look alarming, the vast majority of lawn mushrooms in NB are harmless to your grass and are actually improving your soil by breaking down woody debris into nutrients your lawn can use.

New Brunswick's Maritime climate creates ideal conditions for mushroom growth. They typically appear after periods of **warm, wet weather** — which NB sees frequently from June through October, with the province receiving 1,100-1,200mm of rainfall annually. You will often see a flush of mushrooms after a few days of rain followed by mild temperatures (15-25°C). They are particularly common in shaded areas, low spots where moisture collects, and in lawns with heavy thatch buildup. Newer subdivisions in Moncton, Fredericton, and Saint John often see abundant mushrooms because construction sites frequently bury tree stumps and woody debris that fungi then colonize.

Fairy rings — circles or arcs of darker green grass with mushrooms along the edge — are a specific pattern caused by fungi spreading outward from a central point of buried organic matter. These rings grow 6-12 inches per year and can persist for decades. While they rarely harm the lawn directly, the fungal mat can become so dense that it repels water, causing the grass within the ring to brown during dry spells.

To reduce mushroom growth, focus on the conditions that promote them. Improve drainage in low-lying areas by topdressing with a sand-compost blend to raise the grade. Reduce shade where possible by trimming overhanging branches. Dethatch your lawn if the thatch layer exceeds 1/2 inch, and core aerate in early September to improve air circulation in the soil. If you know where buried wood or stumps exist, removing them eliminates the food source,

though this can be a significant excavation project costing $200-500 depending on the size.

For cosmetic purposes, simply mow over the mushrooms or knock them down with a rake before they release spores. Pick them up and dispose of them in your municipal green bin if you have children or pets you are concerned about — while most lawn mushrooms are not dangerously toxic, some NB species can cause stomach upset if ingested. Never eat lawn mushrooms unless positively identified by an expert. Fungicides are generally ineffective against lawn mushrooms because they only treat the visible fruiting body while the actual fungal network lives deep in the soil. In most cases, mushrooms will naturally decrease over time as the buried organic matter is fully decomposed, which can take anywhere from 3-10 years depending on the size of the buried material.

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Q9

How do I fix a patchy lawn after a construction or paving project in NB?

Restoring a lawn after construction or paving in New Brunswick requires addressing the severe soil compaction, debris contamination, and disrupted grade that heavy equipment inevitably leaves behind. Simply scattering seed over the damaged area rarely works because the underlying soil conditions are hostile to grass establishment — this is one of the most common mistakes NB homeowners make after a driveway, addition, or septic installation project.

Start by assessing the damage thoroughly. Walk the affected areas and probe the soil with a screwdriver or garden fork. If you cannot push a screwdriver in more than 2-3 inches, the soil is severely compacted and will not support healthy turf without remediation. Check for buried construction debris — concrete chunks, nails, gravel, sawdust, and drywall are commonly left behind in NB construction sites and can leach chemicals or create drainage problems. Remove any debris within the top 6-8 inches of soil.

For moderately damaged areas (soil is compacted but not contaminated), deep core aeration in a crosshatch pattern followed by topdressing with 1-2 inches of quality screened loam and compost mix will prepare the soil for seeding. For severely damaged areas — which is more typical — you will need to rototill the top 6-8 inches of soil, remove any rocks and debris brought to the surface, and incorporate 3-4 inches of compost to rebuild soil structure. New Brunswick's naturally acidic soils (pH 4.5-6.0) may also need lime to bring pH closer to the 6.0-6.5 range that grass prefers — a soil test through the NB Department of Agriculture costs about $25-30 and is well worth it before investing in restoration.

Timing your restoration correctly is essential in NB. The ideal seeding window is late August through mid-September, when soil temperatures are warm enough for quick germination (15-20°C) but cooler air temperatures reduce moisture stress on seedlings. Spring seeding (mid-May to early June) is your second-best option but competes with weed germination. Avoid seeding in the heat of summer. Use a quality seed blend suited to your conditions — a mix of 60% Kentucky Bluegrass, 20% Fine Fescue, and 20% Perennial Ryegrass works well for most NB lawns in Zones 4-5. Apply seed at 4-6 pounds per 1,000 square feet, lightly rake it in, and cover with a thin layer of peat moss or straw mulch to retain moisture.

Keep the seeded area consistently moist — light watering 2-3 times daily for the first 2-3 weeks until germination is well established. For large areas exceeding 2,000 square feet, hiring a professional landscaper for hydroseeding ($0.10-0.20 per square foot) often provides more uniform results than hand seeding. Expect the restored lawn to take a full growing season to fill in completely.

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Q10

Why are my hostas not thriving in my New Brunswick shade garden?

Hostas that fail to thrive in New Brunswick shade gardens are most commonly suffering from slug damage, poor soil conditions, or too much shade — even for these famously shade-tolerant plants. While hostas are considered one of the most reliable perennials for NB gardens (hardy to Zone 3), they do have specific requirements that Maritime conditions can complicate.

Slugs are the number one hosta enemy in New Brunswick, and the province's damp Maritime climate creates paradise conditions for these pests. NB's consistently humid nights and frequent rainfall mean slug populations can be enormous, particularly in shaded garden areas with mulch or leaf litter. Slug damage appears as irregular holes in leaves, often with silvery slime trails visible in the morning. To control them, set out shallow dishes of beer as traps (slugs are attracted and drown), apply iron phosphate slug bait (safe for pets and wildlife, available at NB garden centres for $10-15), or create barriers of copper tape around your most prized specimens. Water your shade garden in the morning rather than evening to reduce overnight moisture that slugs depend on.

Soil quality is often overlooked in shade gardens. Many NB shade gardens exist under mature trees whose roots have depleted the soil of nutrients and moisture. Hostas are heavy feeders that need rich, organic soil with consistent moisture — not the dry, root-filled ground typically found under NB's large maples and birches. Amend your shade garden beds with 3-4 inches of compost annually and apply a balanced slow-release fertilizer (10-10-10) in late May after the risk of frost has passed. New Brunswick's acidic soils (pH 4.5-6.0) are generally acceptable for hostas, which prefer a pH of 6.0-7.0 — a light application of lime can help if your soil tests very acidic.

Too much shade can limit even hostas. While they tolerate deep shade, most hostas perform best in **filtered or dappled light** — roughly 2-4 hours of morning sun or bright indirect light throughout the day. In the deep shade under dense NB spruce or fir trees, even hostas will produce fewer leaves, smaller clumps, and almost no flowers. Blue-leaved varieties like 'Halcyon' or 'Blue Angel' tolerate the most shade, while gold and variegated types like 'Sum and Substance' or 'Patriot' need more light to develop their best colour.

Other issues to investigate include crown rot from planting too deep or mulching directly against the stems, vole damage to roots during winter (common in NB — reduce mulch depth to 2 inches in fall to discourage voles), and frost damage to early-emerging varieties when NB's late spring frosts (Fredericton's last frost averages May 20) catch new growth. If your hostas consistently underperform, consider dividing overcrowded clumps in early spring, improving drainage in waterlogged areas, and selecting varieties proven to perform in NB's Zone 4-5 conditions.

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Q11

How do I deal with Japanese beetles in New Brunswick gardens?

Japanese beetles have become an increasingly serious pest in southern New Brunswick, particularly in the Moncton, Saint John, and Fredericton regions, where they voraciously feed on roses, linden trees, grapes, raspberry bushes, and dozens of other ornamental and edible plants. These metallic green-and-copper beetles are about 1 cm long and feed in groups, skeletonizing leaves by eating the tissue between veins, leaving behind a lace-like pattern that is unmistakable.

Adult Japanese beetles are active in New Brunswick from **late June through August**, with peak feeding typically occurring in July. They are most active on warm, sunny days and tend to start feeding at the top of plants, working their way down. A single beetle causes modest damage, but they release aggregation pheromones that attract more beetles to the same plant — which is why infestations can seem to explode overnight. Their larvae are the white grubs that damage NB lawns from August through October.

For immediate control, hand-picking is surprisingly effective for small to moderate infestations. In the early morning when beetles are sluggish, knock them into a bucket of soapy water — they drop straight down when disturbed rather than flying away. Do this daily during peak season and you can significantly reduce damage. Avoid Japanese beetle traps, despite their popularity at NB hardware stores. Research consistently shows these pheromone-baited traps attract far more beetles to your property than they catch, actually increasing damage to nearby plants.

Neem oil spray is the most effective organic treatment available under New Brunswick's cosmetic pesticide restrictions. Spray affected plants every 7-10 days during beetle season, coating both upper and lower leaf surfaces. Neem acts as both a repellent and an anti-feedant — beetles that consume neem-treated foliage eat less and produce fewer viable eggs. Apply in the evening to avoid harming pollinators and to prevent leaf burn. Kaolin clay spray (Surround WP) creates a physical barrier on leaves that deters feeding and is another option approved

for use in NB.

Long-term control targets the grub stage. Apply beneficial nematodes (Heterorhabditis bacteriophora) to your lawn in late August or early September when grubs are small and feeding near the soil surface — soil temperatures must be above 15°C for nematodes to be effective. This interrupts the beetle's life cycle on your property. Milky spore disease (Paenibacillus popilliae) is another biological grub control that persists in the soil for years, though it takes 2-3 seasons to build up effective levels.

Consider planting beetle-resistant species to reduce future problems. Japanese beetles rarely feed on lilacs, forsythia, red maple, spruce, boxwood, or most herbs. If your roses or lindens are being devastated annually, interplanting with resistant species can reduce the overall attractiveness of your garden to beetles. For severe infestations affecting valuable specimen trees, a professional arborist or pest management company ($100-300 per treatment) can provide targeted solutions appropriate for NB conditions.

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Q12

What causes tree bark to split during New Brunswick winters?

Tree bark splitting during New Brunswick winters is primarily caused by frost cracking — a phenomenon where rapid temperature fluctuations cause the bark and outer wood to expand and contract at different rates, creating vertical splits that can run several feet along the trunk. This is especially common on the southwest-facing side of trees, where winter sun warms the bark during the day to well above freezing, then temperatures plummet rapidly after sunset — a cycle that NB's continental-influenced climate produces regularly from December through March.

Young and thin-barked tree species are most vulnerable in New Brunswick. **Maples (particularly sugar and red maple), fruit trees (apple, cherry, plum), lindens, willows, and mountain ash** are the most commonly affected across the province. Trees planted in exposed locations without wind protection or in urban settings where reflected heat from buildings intensifies daytime warming are at highest risk. New transplants and trees under 10 years old suffer most because they have not yet developed thick, insulating bark.

Frost cracks typically appear as long vertical splits on the south or southwest side of the trunk, sometimes accompanied by an audible crack during sudden temperature drops. The wound may partially heal during the growing season, forming a callus ridge along each side of the crack, but often re-opens the following winter in the same location, creating a recurring wound that can persist for the life of the tree. While frost cracks are unsightly, they rarely kill an otherwise healthy tree — though they do create entry points for fungal diseases and wood-boring insects.

Prevention is straightforward and highly effective. Wrap the trunks of vulnerable trees with commercial tree wrap (white or light-coloured plastic tree guards or crepe-paper tree wrap) from late October through late April. The wrap reflects winter sun and moderates temperature swings, dramatically reducing the risk of cracking. This is especially important for the first 5-7 years after planting. Apply wrap from the base of the trunk to just above the first major branch. In Fredericton, Woodstock, and other inland NB locations (Zone 4a-4b) where winter temperature swings are most extreme, wrapping young trees should be considered essential fall maintenance.

If a frost crack has already occurred, resist the urge to fill it with pruning sealer or tar — research has shown these products actually slow healing and can trap moisture and disease organisms inside the wound. Instead, keep the tree healthy and vigorous through proper watering, mulching (2-3 inches in a ring around the base, not touching the trunk), and appropriate fertilization so it can compartmentalize the wound naturally. If the crack is extensive, gaping, or showing signs of decay (soft, punky wood or fungal growth), consult a certified arborist ($150-400 for an assessment in NB) to evaluate whether cabling, bracing, or more involved treatment is warranted.

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Q13

How do I fix lawn damage caused by dog urine in New Brunswick?

Dog urine damages New Brunswick lawns because it contains high concentrations of nitrogen salts — essentially a massive overdose of fertilizer in a small area — that burns and kills the grass, leaving characteristic circular brown spots often surrounded by a ring of darker green, lush grass. The green ring results from the diluted nitrogen at the edges actually fertilizing the grass, while the concentrated centre dose kills it. Female dogs and large breeds cause the worst damage because they void larger volumes in a single spot.

Immediate dilution is the most effective treatment. If you see your dog urinate on the lawn, drench the spot with a full watering can or garden hose within 15 minutes. This dilutes the nitrogen concentration before it can burn the grass roots. In NB's humid Maritime climate, natural rainfall helps reduce damage compared to drier regions, but during the drier July-August period when supplemental watering is already needed, urine spots become more visible and damaging because there is less natural dilution.

To repair existing brown spots, **rake out the dead grass, lightly scratch the soil surface with a garden fork**, and apply a quality seed blend at a heavy rate (6-8 seeds per square inch). The best time to repair urine spots in New Brunswick is early September when soil temperatures are warm for germination but cooler air reduces moisture stress on seedlings. For spring repairs, wait until mid-May after your last frost date (approximately May 15 in Saint John, May 20 in Fredericton). Cover the seeded area with a thin layer of peat moss and keep it moist for 2-3 weeks. Most urine spots are small enough that Kentucky Bluegrass's spreading growth habit will fill them in naturally if the surrounding lawn is healthy.

Longer-term solutions focus on prevention. Train your dog to use a designated area of the yard — a mulched or gravel patch in an inconspicuous corner works well and eliminates lawn damage entirely. Some NB dog owners create a 4x6 foot pea gravel relief area that is easy to hose down and does not affect the lawn. Dietary supplements marketed as "lawn burn preventers" have mixed results and should only be used after consulting your veterinarian.

Lawn management practices also help reduce visibility of damage. Maintain your NB lawn at 3-3.5 inches height during summer, which promotes deeper root systems more resistant to salt burn. Water your lawn deeply once per week (aiming for 1 inch total including rainfall) to help flush nitrogen salts through the root zone. Core aeration in early September improves water penetration and helps dilute urine concentrations more quickly. Applying a thin layer of horticultural gypsum (calcium sulfate) to frequently used areas can help displace sodium from urine in the soil, though this is more effective in NB's clay soils than in sandy coastal soils. If you have multiple dogs and extensive damage, overseeding the entire lawn in fall combined with a dedicated relief area is the most practical long-term solution.

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Q14

Why is my paver patio sinking or heaving after a NB winter?

Paver patios that sink, heave, or become uneven after a New Brunswick winter are almost always the result of an insufficient gravel base that fails to prevent frost heaving — NB's deep frost penetration (4-6 feet in inland areas) demands a more robust base than many contractors and DIY installers provide. The freeze-thaw cycles typical of Maritime winters, where temperatures can swing from -20°C to +5°C within days, create enormous upward pressure as soil moisture freezes and expands beneath an inadequate base.

The minimum base depth for paver installations in New Brunswick should be **12-16 inches of compacted gravel (3/4-inch crusher run)**, depending on your location and soil type. Many failed patios in NB were installed with only 4-6 inches of base — sufficient for milder climates but completely inadequate for New Brunswick's frost conditions. Clay soils, which are common in the river valley areas around Fredericton, Woodstock, and the Miramichi, are particularly prone to frost heaving because clay holds moisture that expands dramatically when frozen. Sandy coastal soils near Moncton and Saint John drain better and are somewhat more forgiving, but still require a proper base depth.

Sinking typically occurs when the base material was not properly compacted during installation, or when water pools beneath the patio and erodes the base over time. Poor drainage — where water from downspouts, roof runoff, or grading directs water toward or under the patio — accelerates this problem. Heaving, where individual pavers or sections push upward, results from water trapped beneath the pavers freezing and expanding. Both problems worsen with each successive NB winter.

For minor issues affecting less than 20% of the patio area, targeted repair is usually practical. Remove the affected pavers, excavate the base material, add and compact additional gravel to the proper depth, re-level the bedding sand (1 inch of coarse concrete sand), and re-lay the pavers. This costs approximately $500-1,500

depending on the area involved. For heaved sections, check for tree roots growing under the patio — maple and willow roots in NB can lift pavers significantly and the roots must be addressed or the problem will recur.

If more than 30-40% of the patio is affected, a complete rebuild with a proper base is usually more cost-effective than repeated spot repairs. This means removing all pavers, excavating to the proper 12-16 inch depth, installing compacted gravel in 4-inch lifts (each lift compacted individually with a plate compactor), adding the bedding sand layer, and re-laying the pavers. Budget $15-25 per square foot for professional paver repair and relevelling in NB. When rebuilding, also address drainage by ensuring a minimum 2% slope away from your home's foundation and installing perforated drain pipe at the base if the area has chronic water issues. A reputable NB landscaping company should guarantee their base work against frost heaving for at least 3-5 years.

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Q15

How do I get rid of ant hills in my New Brunswick lawn?

Ant hills in New Brunswick lawns are primarily built by common pavement ants and field ants, and while they are a nuisance that creates unsightly mounds and uneven surfaces, the ants themselves are actually beneficial insects that aerate soil and control other pest populations. The sandy, well-drained soils common in coastal NB areas near Moncton and Saint John are particularly attractive to ant colonies, though hills can appear in any NB lawn.

The small cone-shaped mounds of fine soil that appear on your lawn — typically 2-6 inches tall — are excavated material from underground tunnel systems that can extend 2-4 feet deep. Ant activity in NB peaks from **late May through September** when colonies are most active, and you will often see a surge of new hills after rain as ants clear waterlogged tunnels. In most cases, a few ant hills scattered across a lawn are not worth treating and can

simply be raked flat before mowing.

For moderate infestations that are affecting lawn quality, start with the least invasive approaches. Rake the hills flat regularly and the ants may eventually relocate to a less disturbed location. Pouring a large pot of boiling water (3-4 litres) directly into the centre of each mound can eliminate individual colonies without any chemicals — repeat over 2-3 days to catch ants that were deep in the tunnels. This method is effective on about 60% of treated mounds. Diatomaceous earth (food grade) sprinkled on and around active mounds dehydrates ants that walk through it and is safe for pets and children — available at garden centres across NB for $10-15 per bag.

Borax-based bait stations are the most effective long-term solution because worker ants carry the bait back to the queen, eventually eliminating the entire colony. Mix 1 tablespoon of borax with 1 cup of sugar and enough water to make a paste, place small amounts near active mounds in shallow containers, and protect from rain. This method takes 1-3 weeks to show results but eliminates colonies at the source. Commercial ant bait products ($8-15) use the same principle and are available at NB hardware stores. Under New Brunswick's cosmetic pesticide restrictions, most synthetic insecticide sprays cannot be used on lawns for ant control alone.

To discourage ants from colonizing your lawn, maintain thick, healthy turf through regular fertilization and overseeding — ants prefer thin, sparse lawns with dry, exposed soil. Core aeration in September followed by topdressing with compost creates a denser turf that is less inviting to colony establishment. Keep your lawn well-watered during dry periods, as ants strongly prefer dry soil conditions. If ants are entering your home from lawn colonies near the foundation, seal entry points with caulk and create a 12-inch gravel border between your foundation and lawn to discourage nesting near the house. For severe infestations with dozens of mounds, a professional pest management service ($150-300) can provide targeted treatment within NB's regulatory framework.

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