



LAWN DISEASES

Twenty-five years ago, leaf spot and melting-out were the most common turf diseases in Northwest Iowa. Improved disease resistant cultivars of bluegrass, rye, and fescue now used in most sod production and available to homeowners have reduced the disease considerably.



LEAF SPOT

In older turf, the leaf-spot stage develops early in the season when atmospheric temperatures are 70-85 F. Often undetected at the stage, it is visible as a “brown halo” after the lawn is mowed making the diseased lower portion of the plant more visible. As the summer temperatures arrive, the crown and roots are attacked. Large areas of dead grass can be removed leaving a very thin stand of live green turf. Fungicide should be applied in early April and repeated three times about 14 days apart. Treating after the disease is active is not recommended.



DOLLAR SPOT

All cool season turf grasses i.e. bluegrass, rye, and fescue can be affected, but dollar spot is most damaging to bluegrass. The disease may appear anytime from late spring through late summer. Dollar spot favors warm humid days and cool nights that produce dew and humidity on the turf canopy. Early morning dew often creates a cobweb-line mycelium on the affect area.

The disease manifests itself as two to four-inch straw-colored patches of blighted turf. Affect areas may merge and become large as the disease spreads. A bleached white lesion in the shape of an hour glass will be present on individual leaf blades. There may be a reddish-brown margin to the lesion. Dollar spot is often severe in lawns where thatch is over 1/2” thick that prevents fertilizers from reaching the plant’s roots or where too little fertilization is being used. Mowers as well as foot traffic will easily spread dollar spot. Make fungicide applications when symptoms are first noticed.



POWDERY MILDEW

Powdery mildew is caused by the fungus *Erysiphe graminis*. It occurs commonly on Kentucky bluegrass, rye, and fine fescues growing in shade. It is common on overly fertilized turf. Powdery mildew is named for the grayish-white to light tan, powdery mat that forms on leaf blades. It is easily recognized, blades appear to have been dusted with powder. The leaf tissue under the mold turns yellow and then tan or brown. Severely infected plants wither and die. During cloudy, humid periods, look for this disease when the days are warm, and nights are cool. Unlike most foliage blights or leaf spot diseases, powdery mildew does not require wet foliage, only high atmospheric humidity.



CONTROL

For any of these diseases Fertlome Liquid Systemic Fungicide and Bonide’s Infuse Systemic Liquid Fungicide are both effective and area available at Greenworld’s Garden Center.