

YELLOW TUFT

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Yellow tuft, also known as downy mildew, is caused by Sclerophthora macrospora. The disease occurs on most turfgrasses but does not always produce the typical signs of disease known as "mildew". "Yellow tuft" is the most descriptive symptom of the disease. Initially, symptoms may appear as slightly stunted growth and thickened or broadened leaf blades. When the disease becomes more severe, small yellow patches ranging from 0.5 to 3 inches in diameter appear in the turfgrass. These yellow patches are generally small on the bentgrasses and fescues but larger on the ryegrasses and bluegrasses. These yellow patches are easily pulled from turf, and close examination reveals excessively tillered, yellow shoots with few roots.

Yellow tuft occurs most commonly during late spring and autumn when temperatures are cool to warm (70° to 80°F). Symptoms usually appear first in poorly drained areas. Because the pathogen depends upon free water for local movement of infectious spores, persistent periods of damp cool weather may enhance disease development over large areas. Damage from the disease is also greatest where excessive nitrogen was applied before the advent of warm weather. Although not considered a serious disease of turfgrasses, we have noted severe thinning in two year old and younger 'Penncross' and 'Penneagle' creeping bentgrass during warm weather.

Application of iron (Fe_2SO_4) will help mask the symptoms. No more than 1/2 pound of nitrogen per 1000 ft^2 per month should be applied in June, July and August. Because the fungus is closely related to Pythium, Ridomil (Subdue) and Banol are reported to inhibit the disease. These chemicals and an experimental are being tested at the Hancock Field Research Laboratory during the 1983 season.