

GRASS-KILLING DISEASE

"Newsletter" G.C.S.A. of New England

A lawn-killing disease that is difficult to control and spreads alarmingly rapidly, threatens to destroy lawns and golf greens throughout the eastern half of the United States.

Plant Experts have identified a fungal disease that threatens to wipe out lawns and golf greens all over the eastern half of the United States .

First observed in 1959, but only identified this year, Fusarium blight, an uncontrollable lawn disease, has already caused hundreds of thousands of dollars in damages to several eastern localities.

Even the Merion Kentucky bluegrass on the White House lawn was completely destroyed by the disease last year.

A Massachusetts golf green was completely wiped out in one week's time. In several Long Island communities, one week of mid-80 degree temperature and fog provide the proper conditions for the Fusarium blight to destroy the sodded lawns of several hundred homeowners at a cost of \$8,000 each last year. When the fog cleared, the lawn grass was dead.

Prof. Houston B. Couch, plant pathologist at Pennsylvania State University, Colleg of Agriculture, University Park, believes that the Fusarium threat poses a major problem to every golf green and sodded lawn in the eastern United States.

The disease spreads rapidly. It is transmitted by mowing equipment, shoes and the air. The spores of the Fusarium fungus, once started, are extremely difficult to check.

Signs of the blight appear only after it is too late to control it. "Haloos" of dead grass around green grass are the final signs of the infection on lawns.

The only thing that can be done is to completely resod the lawn, after fumigating with methyl bromide. The White House lawn was redone this way.

Some hope is provided by the commercially available fungicide, Dithane M-45, only if it is applied in time to halt the fungus in the invisible early stages of the disease.

The disease seems to thrive best in cooler sections of the country, stated Dr. K. W. Kreitlow, plant pathologist at the Beltsville, Md., station of the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Fusarium roseum is the organism causing the disease, which spreads with "Alarming rapidity."

— Science News Letter, 86:11 July 4, 1964

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