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Parathion 2%
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OVERWATERING CAUSES GRASS WILT

from *Grounds Maintenance*

Too much water and too much fertilizer often cause grass wilt, says Harry Meusel of Yale University.

Speaking at the first Delaware Turfgrass Conference, Meusel explained that wilt occurs when grasses lose more moisture than they absorb. Since heavily watered grass has about twice as many surface pores as lightly watered grass, it loses moisture faster and wilts sooner in hot weather.

Temperature and light intensity also affect wilting, he said. At temperatures below 70 degrees F., very little wilting occurs. While above 70 degrees F., wilt increases rapidly, especially in heavily watered grass. Light intensity, which affects size of surface pores, also influences wilting. Grasses in shaded areas wilt more slowly than those in bright sunny sites.

Because more water evaporates from plants after fertilization, fertilizer applications should be avoided during the wilting season, Meusel pointed out.

The best safeguard against wilting is a strong root system. Here again, heavily watered grass can be a problem since root systems are usually short and stubby when moisture is readily available near the soil surface. Lightly watered grass has long, thin roots that reach deep into the soil making it less susceptible to wilting.

Application of a phenol mercuric acetate solution will also help protect grass from wilting by closing the leaf pores, Meusel added.



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