

## TURF PROBLEMS LATER IN SEASON

Declaring early battle on turf diseases means fewer problems later in the season.

"Early fungicide treatment is the key to controlling turf diseases such as leaf spot, dollar spot and melting-out," says Todd Cutting, TUCO agricultural chemical technical extension field representative.

Like many other turf diseases, leaf spot spores over-winter in thatch and surrounding dead leaf matter. Spring rains splash these spores onto emerging leaf blades. As temperatures rise, fungus activity increases and more and more leaf tissue becomes infected.

"Even well-tended turf may show signs of leaf spot," Cutting says. "But if left untreated, the disease can infect the crown and rot the plant." This advanced stage, known as melting-out, means loss of turf plants. Stands of grass become very thin and large areas can be wiped out.

Thus, early control of leaf spot inoculum is crucial and should be included in your disease control program. Cutting suggests applying a fungicide such as Acti-dione RZ in mid-April or earlier, immediately after the first mowing. "It seems that one early spray may be as good as two or three late ones," he notes. A second spray should follow three weeks later.

"If the disease is heavy, regular applications should be made at 7 to 14 day intervals. After the disease is arrested, return to 14 to 21 day intervals," Cutting recommends.

With regular applications, a fungistat barrier can be established to help prevent diseases from spreading. Such a program could also help prevent melting-out. Since melting-out becomes apparent in early summer, unchecked leaf spot activity already has insured or destroyed the grass's root system, he explains.

To enhance fungicidal activity and correct possible iron chlorosis of the grass, Cutting recommends adding ferrous sulfate to the tank mixture at a rate of 1/2 oz./1,000 square feet of turf area. Ferrous sulfate is an inorganic chemical of iron and sulfate, and iron is an important component of photosynthesis.

"We've been using ferrous sulfate with our fungicides since the early 1950s to increase the green of grass and improve the finish of turf," he explains. Data show that when turf is under stress, particularly during hot summer months, the grass plants have difficulty absorbing iron from the soil. When applied as a spray, iron can be foliarly absorbed through the leaf tissue.

"Very early fungicide treatments could also aid in the control of pink snow mold, although most people tend to rely on fall snow mold treatments for protection," says Cutting.

In addition, red thread and rust, although not in epidemic proportions early in the season, can be contained with early treatments, he notes. Red thread, identifiable by its distinctive round patches of pink or red, is a disease found in rye and fescue. Rust, a mid-fall disease that inflicts little damage in the spring, is just waiting for the appropriate time to start spreading, Cutting explains.

By incorporating these suggestions into your disease control program, turf diseases can be minimized and late season outbreaks may be prevented.

The person who can laugh with life has developed deep roots with confidence and faith — faith in oneself, in people and in the world, as contrasted to negative ideas with distrust and discouragement.

Democritus

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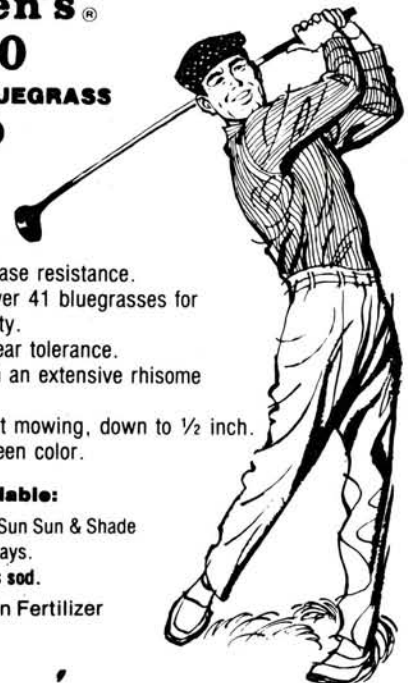
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