

# GET TOUGH

on  
Dollar Spot  
Fusarium Patch  
Leaf Spot  
Brown Patch  
Red Thread

\*Approval Pending

## PROBLEM SOLVERS

By Balakrishna Rao, Ph.D., and Thomas P. Mog, Ph.D.

**Q:** Every year during the summer months we have seen lawns with extensive tip dieback of grass blades. I think it is Anthracnose disease. Could you please help me in identifying and controlling this problem? (Michigan)

**A:** The tip dieback and blighting can be caused by a number of different fungi such as *Leptosphaerulina*, *Ascochyta*, *Septoria* and *Colletotrichum*. With the help of a 10X magnifying lens, examine affected turfgrass blades. You can distinguish *Colletotrichum*, the causal agent of Anthracnose, from all other fungi causing tip dieback by the presence of dark, minute spines protruding from the leaf surface in clusters. These are the fruiting bodies (acervuli) of the Anthracnose fungus. The other fungi (mentioned above) have smooth-walled fruiting bodies.

Anthracnose disease is reported to be very widespread and probably infects all cultivated turfgrass in warm (80°-85°F.) and prolonged moist weather. This disease usually establishes in turfgrass that is weakened by other pest problems such as leaf spot disease, improper fertility, compacted soil, etc.

Affected turf may show round to elongated, reddish-brown leaf lesions which often coalesce and blight the blades. Older affected blades will show the fruiting bodies (acervuli) with dark spines. Diseased turf is reddish-brown at first, fading to a light tan or yellow. Patches may vary from a few inches to 10-20 feet in diameter.

Follow good cultural practices to minimize the disease incidence and improve turf vigor. Provide proper watering and feeding. Pick up clippings to reduce the spread of dis-

ease and aerify if the soil is compacted. Applications of fungicides such as Tersan 1991, Fungo, Spot Kleen, Tersan LSR, Fore, Zineb, Dyrene, Daconil 2787, Captan or Tersan-75 will also help to manage the disease. Read the label and follow the directions.

**Q:** This year we have seen a number of our clients' lawns showing browning of the turfgrass around house foundations. Upon close examination we found 8-legged, small insects. I think they are clover mites but I am not sure whether these insects can cause such an extensive injury to turfgrass. I would appreciate your comments concerning positive identification of clover mites and how to control them. (Pennsylvania)

**A:** As you know, the first thing to do in pest management is to have proper identification of the causal agent. From your description of the pest, I feel that you are dealing with a clover mite *Bryobia praetosis* problem.

Mites are not true insects. The clover mites are very small (about 1/30-inch), with eight legs and a reddish-brown body, and usually present a problem by invading houses during the spring and fall. They have very distinguishing, long, front legs which extend forward from the body. These can be easily seen with a 10X hand lens. Mites feed on turfgrass, clover and other vegetation. During fall they lay eggs on building walls, tree bark or plants and have several generations per year. Infested turf initially shows a silvery appearance caused by the mites feeding activity. Damage is often seen in spring in a 3-foot band around house foundations.

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Usually chemical treatment is not necessary for clover mite control because predators keep the populations under good control. If the damage is extensive, apply chemical treatments at the first sign of infestation. Chemicals such as diazinon, Spectracide, Kelthane or Dursban can be used to minimize this pest. Read the label and follow the directions for more details.

**Q:** Some of our clients' properties are heavily infested with moss. The properties are full of trees around the outer border with the house usually located in the center of a donut-shaped lawn. The lawns were seeded about 2-3 years ago and they are very thin. I would appreciate your recommendations to manage this moss-spreading problem. (New York)

**A:** Before attempting to control the moss, study the properties and identify the reasons why moss is growing and establishing in these properties. A moss problem is usually the result of improper drainage, insufficient light or poor air circulation. Also, moss can tolerate alkaline or acid soils better than turfgrasses.

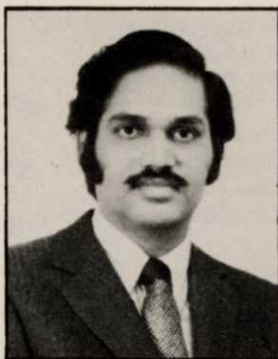
Moss can invade and establish well in those locations where conditions are unfavorable for turfgrass. Moss plants do not have roots, instead they have rhizoids.

The following guidelines may improve the condition of the turf. After identifying the possible reasons why moss is growing in lawns, try to eliminate those problems first. If heavy shade, reduce the shade by thinning tree branches. Improve drainage and air circulation to discourage moss growth. Make a soil test to determine soil pH and fertility and adjust accordingly.

After following these cultural practices, if desired apply chemicals such as powdered copper sulfate (2 lbs./acre or 3 level tablespoons/1000 sq. ft.). Be careful while using this product—use gloves because it stains clothes, skin, etc.

Amonium sulfate (10 lbs./1000 sq. ft. when moss is actively growing) can also be used. Do not water the area after treatment.

After the moss is gone, the thinned out areas in the lawns should be overseeded with turf cultivars adapted to the locations.



Balakrishna Rao is plant pathologist and Thomas Mog is pest management specialist for Davey Tree Expert Co., Kent OH.

Questions should be mailed to Problem Solver, Weeds Trees & Turf, 7500 Old Oak Boulevard, Cleveland, Ohio 44130. Please allow 2-3 months for an answer to appear in the magazine.

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