

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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