

Harsh winter means probable turf damage

Although the Blizzard of 1996 has gone, the amount of damage this extreme winter did to home lawns is still unknown.

Ohio State University turfgrass specialist Joe Rimelspach says you should be on the lookout for snow mold in lawns this spring, especially where snow has drifted or been piled up by plows.

Slimy, circular patches from two inches to a foot in diameter are the distinguishing mark of snow mold damage, Rimelspach says. Sometimes the patches overlap, creating the illusion of extensive damage. Patches begin as a light yellow-green color, become bleached white, and

progress to a tan or brown over time.

Though the damage is cosmetic, Rimelspach recommends lightly raking the dead patches to break up crusted grass and let air and light get to the crown. Fungicides rarely cure the problem, but affected areas should be treated in the fall so the snow mold does not occur again next season.

Other possible problems associated with hard winters, according to Rimelspach:

1) **Salt injury along streets, driveways and walks:** Check the base of the plants for growth once the rest of the lawn starts

growing. If the plant is dead, the only solution is to resod or reseed.

2) **Traffic:** The chances of long-term injury from foot traffic is minimal when the ground is frozen. But if it's covered with slush and then the ground freezes, turf crowns and stolens can be extensively damaged and the chance of recovery is usually poor.

3) **Ice cover:** Thick, clear ice is much more damaging than porous white ice because it seals out oxygen. Turf can survive periods of ice cover longer if it is cushioned by a layer of snow between it and the ice.

4) **Frost heaving:** Reduce heaving by mulching areas seeded in the fall. Roll the lawn just after heaving occurs to press turf roots back into the soil and reduce wind damage. □

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