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COMMON LAWN FUNGAL DISEASES

ASCOCYTA TURF LEAF BLIGHT

Ascochyta Leaf Blight is a common lawn disease that occurs in the late spring to early summer. It's caused by an infection by the fungal pathogen Ascochyta Spp.



Ascochyta Leaf Blight can sometimes be confused with heat stress, Dollar Spot, or fertilizer burn. Many grasses are susceptible, but especially Kentucky bluegrass, tall fescue and perennial ryegrass.

This disease is most common when the weather has quickly changed from very hot and dry or drought conditions to very wet and cool, or the other way around. Excessive rainfall or over-watering and poor irrigation habits can also worsen this disease. The disease most often affects turf that is already stressed.

Ascochyta Leaf Blight comes on quickly, sometimes seemingly overnight. Its symptoms appear as large irregular patches of turf that rapidly turn a bleached-light brown to straw-colour and appear to be dead. From a distance these straw-coloured patches resemble drought stress. Infection occurs through the cut or mowed end of the grass blades as can be seen above.

Normally, healthy grass blades are interspersed with infected ones. The blades will appear bleached from the tip to about 1/3 of the way down and you may see some white banding in the green sections. The infected grass blades also appear to be sucked in from the tip down. If you take a close look at the infected grass with a magnifying glass, look for very small yellow to dark brown, flask-shaped fruiting bodies scattered on the discoloured grass blades. If you find them, there's no need to panic.

If conditions remain favourable, this type of disease can, indeed, persist for weeks but while this disease looks very serious when outbreaks are widespread, it is actually relatively harmless. It will not cause any permanent injury to the lawn since the fungus doesn't attack the crowns or roots.

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Ascochyta can live on dead grass tips in the thatch layer of the lawn, and spores can spread when they are disturbed by lawn mowing or even the splashing of water due to rain or irrigation. So be mindful that this disease can spread very fast by foot traffic, rain, as well as lawn mowing. A lawn mower can pick up the fungus and spread the disease throughout the lawn, potentially even creating a stripe-like pattern of the disease on the lawn.

PREVENTION/TREATMENT OPTIONS

Fungicides are generally ineffective in controlling this disease and therefore NOT recommended.

The following good turf management practices are the best prevention as well as aid in your lawn recovery if it has been infected with Ascochyta:

- ✓ **Watering properly is key to controlling Ascochyta Leaf Blight.**
 - Provide deep infrequent irrigation, meaning... once a week give it a really good watering perhaps for 1 to 1½ hours which equates to about 1 inch to 1½ inches of water per week
 - The key is less frequent but deeper waterings.
 - Grass that is watered deeply promotes stronger and deeper root growth, which results in healthier grass overall.
 - It's always best to irrigate or water your lawn in the early morning hours.
 - However, don't overwater it to the point that you have standing water and soggy soil hours later... Allow the surface of the lawn to dry out between your waterings.
 - Overwatering or watering late in the day can cause the lawn to stay wet during the night which can make it more prone to other fungal diseases.
 - Watering in the morning allows your grass to dry in the heat of the day and actively uptake the water while it is growing.

- ✓ **It's important to de-thatch (power-rake) and aerate your lawn at least once each year in the spring or fall to increase water infiltration and reduce hiding spots for fungal spores.**
 - You don't want to allow the turf to go into drought/moisture stress during the growing season
 - Aeration will reduce soil compaction and allow oxygen, water and nutrients to move deeper into the soil, encouraging deeper and stronger grass roots... This results in a healthier lawn better able to resist disease.

- ✓ **Fertilize periodically with a balanced fertilizer to help stimulate growth of the grass but don't over-fertilize.**
 - Do not apply fertilizer or synthetic pesticides to the blight affected area.
 - This will stress the grass further and kill off beneficial soil bacteria.

- ✓ **Mow on a regular schedule and properly.**
 - However, do not mow in the morning while your grass is still wet from the dew or the previous night's watering (though you shouldn't be watering in the evening).
 - This will spread the disease further.
 - Mow the lawn once the surface moisture has evaporated.
 - Maintain your lawn at 2½ to 3½ inches in height.
 - The faster the grass is growing, the faster the disease will potentially get grown out of the lawn on its own.
 - Lawns that are slightly longer will also help discourage weeds and browning.
 - Ideally, mow frequently enough so that only 1/3 of the leaf blade is removed each time.

 - Also be mindful that if you wait too long and then cut it quite low, this will stress your lawn, and it can potentially go into a state of shock, making the lawn more disease susceptible.

- Also, avoid mowing during wet weather.
 - Freshly mowed grass typically needs a day to repair the cut.
 - If the grass is wet, disease can easily enter the blades along with the water that enters the wound.
- Further to the above, make sure your mower blade is always sharp.
 - A dull mower will cause damage to grass blades.
 - The shredded grass blade does not heal well and is easily infected by disease.
 - It may turn brown and appear rather unhealthy.
 - Over-cutting of lawns can exacerbate Ascochyta Leaf Blight by giving it more open cuts and thereby making it more susceptible to infection.
 - But reducing mowing frequency will give grass more time to heal between mowings, reducing the opportunities for pathogens to enter the blades.
- Also, be sure to bag any grass clippings to prevent any further fungal spread.

Given that Ascochyta rarely affects the roots nor kills the grass, it's likely to resolve itself and go away on its own within a few weeks. Once weather conditions improve and you've employed the above proactive measures, you'll be able to mow off the damaged part of the grass blades and the lawn should recover.

*** GENERAL USAGE DISCLAIMER ***

Please note that some of the above illustrative photos are SQLC's, and some may not be. Those that are our photos will be tagged as such. We do not claim ownership of every photo within this document. Nor does our inclusion of them, mean that any rightful owners of these photos necessarily agree with or endorse what we've written within this document. We therefore give credit to those who may be the original owners of these photos --- We've seen them likewise displayed on numerous lawn care websites without links to the original sources, so we're honestly not sure who may be the original photographers. That being said, if anyone wants to use our SQLC photos, they may do so, too, as we're totally fine with that --- Our purpose is nothing more than wanting to educate you about such lawn diseases. We gratefully acknowledge that the following photos, no matter who took them, are some near-perfect examples of various fungal diseases. Whoever photographed them, did so at the perfect time to clearly indicate the main and most obvious symptoms of the diseases --- Our hats go off to them for a job very well done. In utilizing them, we simply wanted to give you the best possible photographic examples of what these particular lawn diseases would look like, to help you identify and know what you're dealing with.

***** SPECIAL NOTE *****

We love helping our clients have great-looking lawns! Of course, we always welcome your inquiries, but we also want to help educate you, too. So many of you have told us how much you appreciate the articles we make available to you.

If there are any questions you may have about your lawn or any challenges or problems you may occasionally encounter with your lawn, don't hesitate to give us a call. As with the above info article you've just read, we also have other highly beneficial lawn care articles, too...

Here are some we've created to support you with your lawn care efforts. They can help you identify any problems as well as offer some possible solutions for some of those occasional challenges lawns can encounter.

...Please see next page...

These info articles are not meant to be one-time definitive cures for whatever might ail your lawn. We all wish it was only that simple... But, there are no magic “spray this once and your lawn will be perfect thereafter” solutions... Unfortunately, those don’t really exist, as much as we might all like them to. However, there are many things you can do to get your lawn in great shape and keep it that way. We encourage you to glean what you can from any of the following articles that may interest you. And for what you're not sure about, give us a call, let's talk about it, and we'll do what we can to help you.

You may reach us at 780-678-6450 if you'd like to receive any of these via email. It would be our pleasure to do our part to help you "make your lawn the envy of your neighbours"...

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7 Steps To A Great Lawn

Caring For Our Lawn Over The Winter

Proactively Preparing Your Lawn For Drought Conditions

From Our **“WHAT YOU’RE NOT TOLD”** Series Of Articles —

What You’re Not Told About All-Natural & Organic Lawn Care Alternatives

What You’re Not Told About Bats & Their Guano

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Why Is My Grass So Thin?

Why Dead Spots On My Lawn?

Why Am I Getting Mushrooms In My Lawn?

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Overseeding For Existing Lawns

From Our **“DIY”** Series Of Articles —

DIY_Alternate Ways To Remove Weeds In Gravel Areas

From Our **“COMMON LAWN FUNGAL DISEASES”** Series Of Articles —

Common Lawn Fungal Diseases (Compendium Of All Common Ones)

Common Lawn Fungal Diseases_The Usual Causes

Common Lawn Fungal Diseases_Snow Mold

Common Lawn Fungal Diseases_Leaf Spot & Melting Out

Common Lawn Fungal Diseases_Ascochyta Turf Leaf Blight

Common Lawn Fungal Diseases_Brown Patch

...See more on next page...

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Common Lawn Fungal Diseases_Summer Patch
Common Lawn Fungal Diseases_Pythium Blight
Common Lawn Fungal Diseases_Red Thread
Common Lawn Fungal Diseases_Rust Diseases
Common Lawn Fungal Diseases_Powdery Mildew
Common Lawn Fungal Diseases_Dollar Spot
Common Lawn Fungal Diseases_Fairy Ring

INFORMATION ON OUR FIVE PRIMARY LAWN CARE SERVICES —

FERTILIZER & WEED CONTROL:

Our Fertilization & Weed Control Program
Possible Reasons For Still Having Weeds
Ten Reasons Our Program is Different

ENRICH SOIL ENHANCER:

Our Enrich Soil Enhancer Program
Different Soil Types Have Different pH Levels

WEEKLY MOWING:

How The Weekly Lawn Mowing Works
Our Quality Control Program
Ten Reasons We Are Different

CORE AERATION:

Why Aerate Your Lawn?

POWER RAKING:

Why Power-Rake Your Lawn?

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