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“Your Home Turf Advantage”

WHY AM I SUDDENLY GETTING MUSHROOMS IN MY LAWN?

This common question comes up every year without fail... Just about everyone occasionally encounters this when we get a lot of rain.

You know the scenario... It's a beautiful morning after a long rainy spell. You step outside to look over your lawn to see how beautifully it's greening up from all that moisture... and **THERE THEY ARE – Those notorious mushrooms have literally mushroomed overnight!**

They weren't there yesterday but they sure are today... They're under the shrubs. They're over by the tree. They're in the shaded grass next to your deck... They're even smack dab in the middle of the yard. How frustrating! You can blame it on the right mix of moisture, shade or cloudy weather, and rich, organic material in the soil. When those elements combine, it's usually *mushroom time*... like it or not.

“After the last few days of rain I've suddenly got mushrooms popping up throughout my lawn. We've got a dog and grandkids, and I'm worried someone's going to eat one. Why are these occurring? How do I get rid of them?”

Good questions! We have some good answers for you...



Lawn mushrooms make a fairly common appearance, particularly in locations with high moisture and low sunlight or somewhat shaded areas. Fortunately, those mushrooms growing in your lawn from time to time tend to be harmless, and **truth be known, they're actually beneficial, believe it or not... but that requires some explanation.**

More specifically, we tend to see them when it's cooler mornings (in the midst of hot summer days) with damp weather after periods of high heat and lots of rain that encourages mushrooms to grow in lawns. High, lingering overnight humidity and ground dampness is an *open invitation* for these fungi to appear.

SO WHY DO MUSHROOMS GROW IN OUR LAWNS?

Mushrooms...all fungi... need three things to thrive: ¹warmth, ²moisture, and ³decaying organic matter. In lawn care terms, this can mean anything from a heavy rain season to a decomposing tree stump sitting in the midst of your lawn.

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Here are some of the most common reasons for lawn mushrooms:

- Heavy rains
- Overwatering
- Poor soil/lawn drainage
- Extended shade/lack of sunlight
- Decaying organic matter like tree stumps, thatch, fallen leaves, grass clippings, animal waste, etc.

We'll soon take an in depth look at how to deal with these fungi... but first a general overview...

HERE'S SOME OF THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT MUSHROOMS —

This is what they do and how they do it.

Mushrooms popping up in an otherwise beautifully manicured lawn can give some of us homeowners and gardeners sudden shrieks of despair. I'm exaggerating to some degree but while we might worry or at least wonder about these unusual growths, they look more alarming than they really are.

Mushrooms come in many shapes and sizes, too.

- They can be spherical or tall and thin, with or without caps.
- Some species look like fungal shelves growing straight out of the side of a tree trunk.
- Some are like puff balls or are like otherworldly-looking fungal growths popping out of nowhere.
- As for colour, they're often shades of brown, white, or grey, but they span the spectrum from red and orange to green, blue, and purple.

For the most part, mushrooms are actually beneficial. It may seem like an odd thing to say and you may not want to believe this, but mushrooms are a sign of a healthy yard and healthy soil, and if that's what's beneath your lawn, then that's actually a good thing (for the most part, but allow me to qualify that...)

While not all mushrooms are poisonous; very, very few, in fact, in lawns are ever poisonous. Most lawn mushrooms do good for the overall growth of your lawn. Sure, they can look unsightly but mushrooms are signs of abundant lawn fungi working to break down dead organic material in the lawn, thereby freeing up nutrients in the soil for your grass to use.

Bacteria and these unsightly mushrooms & related fungi are essential building blocks of healthy *alive* soil.

Mushrooms are essentially the reproductive structures of fungi. They also help soil retain water with their pervasive root systems. So yah, you might say, **fungi are kind of like nature's garbage crew.**

The mushrooms you find in your lawn are simply the fruiting bodies of various fungi, but not all fungi produce the heads you may see as mushroom caps. You'll sometimes or also have other weird shaped fungi appearing on your lawn, too. Having mushrooms in your yard indicates that your soil has the perfect conditions for these unseen mycelium to thrive, come to the surface, and spread. They're the obvious part that pops up above ground in your grass to spread spores around. Just like flower seeds, mushrooms have microscopic spores on their gills, under the cap, that either blow with the wind or travel with any critters who eat them. Their sole purpose is to reproduce more fungi to ensure their survival. Believe it or not, instead of spreading seeds, fungi researchers have found that mushrooms can actually create their own wind or airflow to ensure the spores scatter and then germinate in new soil. That's some detail we don't need to get into but it's interesting to note.

Most of the mushrooms or fungi in your grass, unbeknownst to most of us, are actually residing beneath the soil year-round. They're busily consuming decaying organic debris such as fallen leaves and twigs, old grass clippings, animal droppings/waste, old bits of buried wood, old stumps, dead or dying tree roots, and anything else that is compostable.

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They're an integral part of the soil ecosystem — and you can't have a lush lawn without good soil beneath. So, without us realizing it, they're actually doing their beneficial part to help your lawn look great. Their very small, threadlike filaments that look like roots (called hyphae) do all the underground work. They help grass roots access water more effectively. They improve the soil's structure... These hyphae essentially help break down organic matter into the elements grass needs, including carbon dioxide, and nutrients such as phosphorus, nitrogen, potassium, and other macronutrients, plus micronutrients, too.

THE BAD NEWS ABOUT MUSHROOMS —

Here's the flip side... Although mostly harmless, there are a few drawbacks to having mushrooms and any related fungi in your lawn —

- Firstly, the obvious one is that the mushrooms and other types of fungi can look unsightly in an otherwise lush green lawn. Nobody likes to be surprised by these suddenly appearing everywhere after a heavy rainfall.
- While it's good to know that most lawn mushroom species are not toxic, some are poisonous and can potentially make children and curious pets who might eat them, anything from having a mild stomach ache to being very ill.
 - So, DO NOT let any of your pets graze on the lawn. If you have a curious pet that's likely to chew on odd things, it may be best to go out in the mornings and remove any tempting fungal growths.
 - And of course, it goes without saying, teach children about the potential dangers of indiscriminate munching in the garden (including, by the way, unfamiliar berries, too). Some of the white mushrooms that may appear in your lawn may look very similar to the button and enoki mushrooms we buy in the grocery store. Be sure any children playing in your yard, know NOT to eat or handle any lawn mushrooms or fungal growths of any kind.
 - Still, in the case of accidental ingestion, it is important to identify what was eaten so doctors or veterinarians can make the best diagnosis and cure any tummy ache, etc.
- Needless to say, if left to continually grow and spread within your grass, these fungi can damage localized areas of your lawn.
- Additionally, the presence of mushrooms can signal overwatering of the lawn, which means wasting water, too, or setting up ideal conditions for other fungal diseases to happen in your lawn.
 - That being said, you can't control the weather if it's due to excessive rain, but you can control how frequently you're watering your lawn.
- Some of the other bad news, as some of you may have already discovered, is that mushrooms are nearly impossible to get rid of, as in "once and for all time"...
 - By that I mean, those fungi are always present in your soil beneath your grass just waiting for ideal conditions to arise, and then they'll suddenly appear again. Sometimes you'll get them, sometimes you won't.
 - Their extensive underground root system isn't something you could easily dig out.
 - So even if you remove the visible mushrooms above ground, or worst case, use fungicides, the source of them is still there below ground.
 - You certainly can pull them out or cut them off at their base. However, this won't permanently rid your lawn of mushrooms, though it can give you some temporary *visual* relief, if I may put it that way.
 - It's important to remember too, that mushrooms may show up only when conditions are ideal for them, but once humidity and moisture levels return to drier conditions, they'll likely won't be still appearing.

*** SPECIAL NOTE:** I should also mention that the presence of mushrooms in your lawn does **NOT** necessarily signify that you have a *fairy ring* beginning to grow in your yard. This is a common presumption. It may be that but more often that not, that is not what it is. We have some excellent detailed information for you including photos that explain the clear and obvious differences between the occasional bout of mushrooms popping up in your lawn versus an actual fairy ring in process of forming and taking over part of your lawn. Give us a call if you need any help with either. Fairy rings are something you want to catch as early as possible. If not, you're setting yourself up for some serious yard work to get rid of it... but that's a whole other story...

How to Get Rid of Mushrooms in Your Lawn

Because mushrooms are merely the above-ground symptoms of existing beneficial fungal growth, understand that getting rid of them is usually a *temporary fix* at best. However, removing them quickly may prevent more spores from being released to spread more fungi, thereby lessening their growth.

✓ CONSIDER REMOVING THEM BY HAND.

- Generally-speaking, check your lawn daily especially after any rains... Once you see any mushrooms or other fungi appear, put on a pair of garden gloves and remove them one by one, cut each with a knife at its base.
 - Be careful so that you don't inadvertently spread the spores while handling those fins too much underneath their caps.
- It might seem easiest to do, but DO NOT simply kick, stomp, or use a rake on your mushrooms and fungi thinking that will dislodge them from their anchor and that that's the end of them... Not at all; by doing so, you're likely to have spread their spores everywhere and they will surely grow back, as long as whatever organic decay the fungus is eating is still within your soil, and the area is warm and damp enough for the fungus to thrive.
- Likewise, NEVER use a lawn mower or weed whacker as all you'll do is spread them everywhere, broadcasting them as if you were sowing grass seed. That will set up your lawn to be covered with even more mushrooms, which is the last thing you want to do.
- For the same reason, don't dispose of them in your compost like you might for grass clippings or fallen leaves or other organic yard waste. That would be the ideal home for them to thrive, needless to say. Instead, put them into a plastic bag and tie it tightly before discarding it in the trash.

✓ If you've got a particularly bad area where you're repeatedly getting mushrooms appearing, your best shot at a complete removal may be to dig the grass and soil out beyond the affected area, perhaps 12 to 18 inches deep and about 2 feet outside of the mushroom or fungi cluster. Also remove any food sources it may have that you've likely unearthed such as decaying old tree roots, old pieces of rotten wood, perhaps an old tree stump, etc... It's not easy work, but that's one way to get rid of a bigger outbreak, hopefully.

REMEMBER: I said it earlier, but if you think the above is more work than it's worth, remember too, that once the mushrooms and/or fungi have devoured all of that underground or surface organic material they've been feasting on, the mushrooms should disappear for good. And though we can't control Mother Nature if we're experiencing excessive rainfalls, the good news tends to be that, once the weather's back to normal and things have dried up a bit, you're not likely to have any mushrooms appearing, assuming you got rid of the previous ones before they had a chance to spread any more throughout your lawn (as that's key).

✓ REDUCE EXCESSIVE MOISTURE AND SHADE IN YOUR LAWN.

As previously mentioned, these fungi grow naturally beneath the grass more often than you ever see them. The mushrooms don't become visible amongst blades of grass until conditions are favourable — that is, damp, warm, dark or shaded.

- Clearly, one of the best ways to prevent mushroom growth is to avoid overwatering your lawn.
 - Since many fungi grow best in damp conditions, if you water or irrigate your lawn, consider watering less frequently but when you water, water deeply.
 - Don't be afraid to put down a good inch of water each time you water... This will also help your grass to root more deeply, too, which in turn will actually make it more drought-tolerant, too.
 - Once per week, or twice per week during hotter, dryer weather, is usually enough.
 - Also, be sure to water early in the day, ideally between 5 am and 8 am when it's cooler. That's also when evaporation from heat and wind is minimal. That's when grass and plants are waking up, so to speak, and up-taking water and nutrients the best.
 - Do not water in the evenings as chances also are that your lawn may still remain wet through the night making it more susceptible to potential fungal diseases.
- Also, be mindful that if your lawn does not receive adequate drainage and rainfall or sprinkler water is collecting in some low lying areas or depressions in your lawn, before it has a chance to get into the grass or evaporate, that may be the perfect place for mushrooms to suddenly be occurring, especially if it's combined with other ideal conditions.
- Related to the above... It's not only about the excessive moisture, it's to do with excessive shade, too...
 - So if you're still seeing mushrooms popping up in a shady corner of your property, trim and/or thin any nearby tree branches or overhanging bushes or shrubs so that more sunlight can reach the lawn, thus making the environment less agreeable for mushroom growth.
 - When it's too shady, your grass and the soil beneath will retain any moisture there for longer before drying out and that may set up the ideal conditions for fungal growth.
 - Extra sunshine helps keep mushrooms in check.

✓ CLEAR OUT SOME SOME OF THE ORGANIC MATERIAL

As mentioned earlier, all fungi feed on decomposing organic matter. That's what IS the attraction in your lawn. Reduce or remove their food source and you'll discourage these spore-bearing mushrooms or fungi from making a home on your turf.

- Make your lawn less hospitable to fungi by not only correcting drainage problems but by also eliminating decaying organic matter. Grind down or remove old rotting stumps or tree roots, rake up grass clippings and fallen leaves, dig up buried old wood, and replace any old mulch, etc.
- To make your yard less attractive to them, periodically dethatch your lawn as well as do a core aeration.
 - As you know, we offer both of these services – Power-raking will reduce your thatch level, thereby depriving any fungi of that otherwise ever-present abundant food supply.
 - Thatch is that tightly intermingled compacted layer of some living but mostly dead grass shoots, decaying roots, and other slowly decomposing organic debris between the layer of actively growing grass and the soil underneath it.
 - If you have excess thatch in your lawn (over half an inch), you'll have a lot of organic material that absorbs moisture and essentially acts as *mushroom bait*, so dethatch your lawn at least once a year.
 - As mentioned, we can provide power-raking and aeration services for you.
 - If your lawn has standing water or remains damp for long periods after a rain, your soil may become rather compacted once it dries. Aeration, likewise will help, too.

- It essentially pulls narrow, cylindrical 1 inch to 2 inch deep plugs or cores of soil out of the grass every 4 to 6 inches or so. Aerating your lawn can help improve drainage, which will, in turn, help decrease the moisture that encourages mushrooms. It also helps to increase the amount of oxygen that gets to the roots of your grass.
 - This allows for better air circulation will help prevent the soil from creating the condition of lingering dampness that mushrooms love.
 - As well as reciprocally, it will enable better access for moisture when watered or when it's raining, and/or or for better direct access to the nutrients provided by our fertilizer and Enrich soil enhancer treatments.
- Mushrooms love to breakdown this organic material into elemental components that the grass can utilize.

✓ **MOW REGULARLY SO THATCH DOES NOT BUILD UP.**

- Do not leave long grass clippings on the lawn, especially if it's been awhile since you mowed, as they are a big contributor to excess thatch if never bagged.
- On that note, be sure that whenever you are mowing to never cut more than 1/3 of the grass blade off, and also be sure your lawn mower blades are always sharp. You want to be cutting your grass, not tearing at it, which would then leave it susceptible to other lawn issues.

✓ **FUNGICIDES... YES OR NO?**

Don't panic and start pouring fungicides all over your lawn. We advocate a more natural common-sense approach. **We recommend avoiding using chemical fungicides if at all possible.** The other preventative measures we've mentioned should be enough to reduce the occasional time that you'll encounter mushrooms or fungi. **Remember they're normally just only a temporary problem until weather and soil conditions are less favourable to them.**

We do not suggest applying a fungicide to the lawn as it may do more harm than good. Remember that mushrooms are a sign of beneficial microbes at work in your lawn, which is all part of your lawn's ecosystem. However, applying a fungicide will kill the beneficial microbial activity that's teaming in the soil and cause the soil to die. Killing the beneficial microbial activity in the soil with fungicides, for the purpose of preventing mushrooms from growing in your lawn will have many adverse effects. Those fungi are essential to grass health, and you are more likely to have a healthy lawn if you have healthy fungi, which are the underground workhorses for soil health.

Be mindful that all fungicides aren't necessarily applicable to mushrooms either... For example, some are used to keep lawn leaf spot and root rot diseases from spreading, but they do *not* actually kill fungi; they are used as temporary protective films to prevent more of those particular short-lived fungi from spreading quickly. But they are of absolutely no use against the types of fungi that cause mushrooms, nor do they prevent mushroom growth. What most professional lawn care companies recommend is to simply remove the mushrooms as they appear, mostly for cosmetic purposes and to reduce spore dispersal. As mentioned earlier, the best way to ensure no lawn damage is to hand-pick the mushrooms whenever they occur.

Though some people recommend various DIY methods for creating a fungicide that may work, it's the same risk again of killing off the beneficial microbial activity within your lawns. You don't want to be working against yourself with so-called homemade fungicide elixirs of 5 tablespoons of vinegar per gallon of water mixed applied via a handheld sprayer, or whatever some people suggest... The risk with any of these is that you may kill your grass indirectly, too, if you're not selective enough in your applying the spray.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Instead of fearing mushrooms in your beautifully manicured lush green lawn, make peace with your mushrooms.

Consider those benefits they do offer your soil under your grass. Embrace these capped “seeds” of fungi as essential contributors to your lawn’s health. It’s not the end of the world if you suddenly see them appearing. They’re only temporary in most cases. And don’t start throwing unnecessary chemicals at the problem. Simply remove them as you encounter them and then once your weather and soil conditions have returned to more normal dryer conditions, the mushrooms will go away as the weather changes. Most often the mushrooms will disappear almost as quickly as they appeared.

We’ll always be here for you, to do what we can to help you create and maintain a great lawn that you’ll be proud of.

If you have any other questions about your lawn or may require any lawn care services, don’t hesitate to give us a call.

All the best to you for this season!

Scott’s Quality Lawn Care Team

***** 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.

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”...

...See more on next page...

From Our **“PROACTIVE LAWN CARE”** Series Of Articles —

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

From Our **“WHY?”** Series Of Articles —

Why Is My Grass So Thin?

Why Dead Spots On My Lawn?

Why Am I Getting Mushrooms In My Lawn?

Why Are The Pine Needles Killing My Grass?

From Our **“HOW TO GET RID OF...”** Series Of Articles —

How To Get Rid of Ants

How To Get Rid of Dew Worms

How To Get Rid of Fairy Rings

How To Get Rid of Quackgrass

How To Get Rid of Thistles

From Our **“DAMAGE BY DOGS & OTHER CRITTERS”** Series of Articles —

Fixing & Preventing Dog Spots

Damage Caused by Voles

From Our **“SEEDING LAWNS”** Series Of Articles —

Grass Seeding For New Lawns

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

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

...See more on next page...

“Your Home Turf Advantage”

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?