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“Your Home Turf Advantage”

WHAT ARE THESE DEAD SPOTS APPEARING ON MY LAWN, AND WHAT’S CAUSING THEM?

We welcome your questions about lawn care...

Sometimes the questions require a bit of investigation
before we can diagnose the problem and provide a possible solution...

As you might guess, this one is a rather broad question... Dead spots, dried out grass, bald spots or unhealthy patches of grass can be caused by many different things. It may be a common fungal disease or it might be something else entirely...

Let’s first consider the possible causes that aren’t fungal diseases. Fungal diseases are a huge other topic that we’ll leave for another document.

The fact is, dead patches can appear on anyone’s lawn from time to time, even in well-maintained lawns. It can happen despite you doing all the right things to properly maintain and look after your lawn. If you don’t maintain it that well, the reasons may be obvious... The mysterious ones are those that aren’t as obvious as to the cause.



HERE ARE SOME OF THE MOST COMMON POSSIBLE CAUSES FOR DEAD SPOTS APPEARING ON YOUR LAWN:

[* Additionally, refer to our Common Lawn Diseases document, should that be what may be the real cause of your dead spots]

1. Do you or your neighbors have pets? Or do wild animals visit your yard occasionally?

Are there any dogs, cats, or wild animals urinating or leaving their droppings behind on your lawn ---

This will oftentimes leave a brown, straw-like patch due to the high concentration of urea that burns the grass. Around this dead spot, you may encounter a ring of dark green grass due to the higher-than-

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normal nitrogen content of that animal pee or poo.

If you happen to catch the animal doing their business on your lawn, you may be able to prevent the burn by thoroughly watering and soaking that spot as soon as you can. And of course, do not leave any animal droppings on your lawn for any long period of time as they'll decompose and leave an even nastier mess to deal with let alone harming or killing your grass beneath them.

2. Do you have any visible signs of grubs or other pests above, or in particular, below your grass?

If you've been noticing some beetles on your grass in early summer, or by late summer dead patches of grass are starting to appear in your lawn, you may have a grub problem ---

Grubs are the larvae of various hard-shelled bugs or scarab beetles. It could be Japanese beetles, June bugs, chafers, or others. These white, C-shaped grubs feast on grass roots and the organic matter in your soil causing sections of grass in the lawn to die. Grubs eventually turn into adult beetles and emerge from the soil to mate and lay eggs, which hatch into more grubs, and so on.

Properly maintained lawns can tolerate some degree of grub infestation, but if you have lots of them in your lawn or your lawn has already been struggling, it's going to inevitably get worse if you don't get rid of them.

There are some easy-to-spot signs that you may have grubs in your lawn:

- If a dead patch of your grass lifts away from the ground easily when you tug on it, like a piece of loose carpet, it's likely you may have a grub problem.
 - This happens because grubs eat the roots of grass and leave nothing to secure the turf firmly in place.
- To check several areas of your lawn to see if you perhaps have grubs throughout your lawn, peel back a square foot of green turf here and there...
 - If you see 6 or more grubs in each area, you've got to take action as soon as you can.
- Another indication of a grub problem is raccoons, skunks, or moles regularly visiting and digging up your yard.
 - They love to dine on large grubs.
- Also, before the dead patches even appear, if your lawn feels rather spongy when you step on it, as if it were freshly laid sod, check underneath... you may have the beginning of a grub problem.

Addressing this involves reseeding or resodding after you've dealt with the grub infestation. You should be able to buy some kind of grub killer at most garden centers or similar retailers, too.

3. Have any pesticides, herbicides, or other chemicals or gasoline been spilled on your lawn?

Spilled pesticides or broad-spectrum herbicides that aren't meant for direct application to lawns, such as Roundup will often cause dead spots in the lawn.

A word of caution regarding Roundup ---

- Be careful especially if it rains after spraying it, in which case it could wash away or leech onto adjacent grass or plants and kill them inadvertently.
- People who spot spray weeds on their grass with Roundup usually end up killing the adjacent surrounding grass a bit, too.
- Roundup is okay for weedy empty lots but it is not recommended for weed problems on residential lawns.
- That being said, I'm not sure it's out in the market everywhere just yet, but the manufacturer has supposedly developed a new Roundup For Lawns product that does not contain the active ingredient glyphosate which they claim is not a problem for lawns.
- As always, read the instructions carefully and apply accordingly as there are some conditions and

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restrictions for using that product depending upon grass type and other variables. Even if you have an appropriate weed killer, it may be a little too concentrated for your lawn and may harm your grass.

Always follow the manufacturer's recommendations or do your own bit of testing first, but if it doesn't expressly say that it's okay for lawns, then don't apply it to yours.

Chemical or gasoline spills will often create an irregularly shaped dead patch matching the spill area. If you've accidentally done this, perhaps when refilling gas into your mower as an example, be sure to water the spill area thoroughly.

Always be extra cautious when you have strong chemicals near your grass, and be very careful not to spill any. It's best to prevent a problem than to try to fix the damage it's already done or that will subsequently show up.

4. Has salt or ice melt been spread a little too liberally on your sidewalks, and as such gone onto your grass, too?

In much of Canada, salt or other somewhat similar ice-melt products are applied as an anti-icing measure during the winter and it's not uncommon to see dead spots appear along bordering grass on streets and sidewalks as grasses begin growing in the spring ---

- If your lawn is quite healthy to begin with, these affected areas may heal themselves with plenty of water in the spring.
- If not or if the salt ended up seriously damaging the grass, you may have to reseed those areas or put down new sod.
- Minimizing your application of salt on the sidewalks or being extra careful to not spread it onto or beyond the snowbanks on the edge of your sidewalks, will help reduce future problems.
- However, along roadways, your only option might be to look for non-grass groundcovers to plant along the edges, or some alternative winter de-icer for sidewalks and driveways.

5. Was too much fertilizer applied on your lawn or was it not watered in enough afterwards?

Applying too much fertilizer or spilling some of it on your lawn may burn your grass and leave you with a dead patch ---

- If you accidentally spill any granular fertilizer, remove whatever you can to thin it out first and then be sure to water the spill area thoroughly as soon as you can to wash out the excess nitrogen... If liquid fertilizer, apply enough water on the spill area to dilute it.
- Follow manufacturer's instructions but it's recommended that you always water your lawn after fertilizing it.
 - This is especially important during hot and sunny summer days when there's more risk of scorching your lawn with the fertilizer.
 - During those times, the grass is already heat-stressed or perhaps drought-stressed --- Amply watering it in is crucial.
- Do not load your granular fertilizer spreader while you're on your lawn in case it spills over or escapes from the bottom.
- When you apply the fertilizer, use the steady movement of a spreader on the recommended correct setting to feed your lawn.
- We do, of course, offer our 4-application regimen of Liquid Fertilizer & Weed Control. It's optimized in its N-P-K ratios for the time of the season and our region. Utilizing our trained professionals to spray your lawn is the smartest option. With us there won't be any need to be concerned about too much fertilizer or scorching your lawn. Our trained applicators have years of experience with applying fertilizer to lawns.

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NOTE Re: Granular vs. Liquid fertilizers --- Each has its own pros and cons ---

* As a lawncare company we prefer and offer the liquid fertilizer in conjunction with a broadleaf weed contact herbicide. Our formula has been highly effective and we have over 1000 clients who rely on it to “make their lawns the envy of their neighbours”, as they tell us.

Granular fertilizer:

Pros -

- Less costly in bulk quantities
- Easy to store for long periods of time
- Are typically slow-release though somewhat quicker-release types are becoming available
- Effective as a pre-planting as well as in-season fertilizer

Cons -

- May be ‘hot’ and can burn your grass more easily if not applied carefully
 - Tends to have a much higher salt (potassium) content compared to liquid fertilizer.
 - High salt content makes a granular fertilizer “hot” to your grass roots.
- Harder to apply evenly or consistently
 - It’s a little more prone to human error with the fertilizer spreaders
- Each granule contains different nutrient contents, so it’s not consistent
 - Certain nutrients may not make contact with the roots
 - In granular fertilizer, each dry pellet may contain a different variation whereas in liquid fertilizer, each ounce and drop of fertilizer contains identical nutrient percentages to the rest of the fertilizer.

Liquid fertilizer:

Pros -

- Depending upon applicator, tends to be a much more uniform and consistent application
 - Care still needs to be taken to not over-spray a given area and risk burning the grass
- Quick release... Feeds your lawn immediately... results tend to show up rather quickly
 - It’s more soluble and more readily bio-available to your grass as the liquid nutrients reach plant root and leaf systems more easily
- Seasonal application variances readily available
 - NPK values can be customized/optimized for your area and time of the growing season
 - It is an efficient way to quickly correct recognized nutrient deficiencies in your grass
- Can blend with other liquid lawn care products
 - Lawn care companies usually combine liquid fertilizer with herbicide as the two very effectively go hand in hand
- Ease of handling and application (once set up)
- Effective as a starter or in-season fertilizer

Cons -

- The product tends to be slightly more expensive
- Set up or application processes may be more expensive
 - Some special equipment is needed for lawn care companies, although for the DIY homeowner, it’s usually simply a matter of attaching a hose to the bottle and spraying
- May separate, or settle out when stored
 - Not only is proper mixing crucial but the proportions of nutrients within the liquid concentrate must be correct
 - In lawn care companies, there are licensed applicators that are trained and certified to do the above ensuring a high quality liquid fertilizer optimized for your area.

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6. Do you have any rocks underneath your grass?

Albeit not that common, it's during hot and sunny summer weather, that larger rocks or stones lying just below your grass may heat up enough to burn your grass from the bottom up.

If you notice that dry or dead spots tend to occur in the same place on your lawn whenever it gets hot, you may want to dig up your lawn and investigate whether there are some of these hidden sources of heat radiating up through grass.

Needless to say, it's best to remove any rocks or stones or other large non-organic debris prior to planting your grass or sod.

7. Are your lawn sprinklers giving you proper coverage?

Some home-owners have in-ground irrigation or sprinkler systems... Sprinklers that don't overlap or that may miss watering parts of your lawn may cause those areas of your grass to brown-out or go dormant.

When watering or setting up a new sprinkler system, observe the sprinkler patterns for a while and make sure that your lawn coverage is uniform. Make sure all your lawn is getting adequate water.

NOTE re: How often and how much watering to do ---

When?

- Be mindful that the best time to water is early in the morning between 6 a.m. and 9 a.m. before the sun is out there in full strength heating up the daytime temperatures, and your grass.
- If watering during the mid-day, you're wasting a lot to evaporation before it's had enough chance to get down to the grass roots.
- Watering in the evening or once you come home from work is not a good time either.
 - Although it might seem convenient or smart to wait until later in the day when temperatures are cooler, watering in the evening is more likely to keep lawns wet overnight, which can make the grass more susceptible to fungal diseases.
 - If you must water in the evening, try between 5 p.m. and 6 p.m. which should give the grass blades time to dry before nightfall.
 - The later you water, though, the greater chance of a fungal disease becoming prevalent in your lawn, especially if you're doing this routinely.
 - If it's super hot and dry out during the summer, watering around the dinner hour a couple times a month in addition to your normal weekly early morning waterings, should be okay.
 - Common-sense comes into play obviously, too... your grass will show you signs if you're not watering it enough.
 - If you can't push a 6" screwdriver into your lawn, you're not watering enough.

How often and how much?

- As to frequency... it's far better for your lawn to be watered only once a week (or twice during a hot and dry summer) wherein you put down at least a good inch of water when doing so.
 - Typically a healthy lawn requires 1" to 1½" of water per week.
 - Use a rain gauge if you have one... If not, make a poor man's rain gauge... Get an empty tuna can, which is 1" tall and place it where your sprinkler is evenly showering your lawn.
 - Depending upon your sprinklers and water pressure it'll take about 30 minutes to fill ½" of depth in that tuna can.
 - If you run your sprinklers for about an hour, it should fill the can with an inch of water or so.

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- If yours takes less or more time to fill, use that accordingly to tell you how long of a duration you want to be watering your lawn for when your sprinklers are on.
- Too many home owners make the mistake of watering every day or every other day and turn on their sprinklers for only 10 to 15 minutes or so...
 - What this does is encourage shallow root growth.
 - Shallow root systems dry out fast and weaken your turf.
- Watering less frequently but more thoroughly, giving it a really good soaking, encourages your grass to grow deeper roots, which is what a healthy lawn needs to grow well and become more heat-tolerant and drought-tolerant, etc.

8. If it's none of the above common causes, is it perhaps a fungal disease that's affecting your lawn?

Fungal diseases are not uncommon and usually due to temporary environmental conditions and/or poor lawn maintenance.

However, proper lawn care practices and routine maintenance will reduce the likelihood of recurrence.

There is seldom need for aggressive or drastic measures, unless you've let a disease totally take over your lawn before addressing it.

I won't go into the details on the more common lawn diseases in this document other than to mention some of them. Each one of them could be a multipage document on its own.

Please refer to our Common Lawn Diseases document, should that be what may be the actual cause of your dead spots or any other lawn issues. It will thoroughly explain the signs & symptoms and the potential solutions or fixes for each of the diseases and include pictures, too.

Here are some lawn diseases that can affect lawns in our area ---

Brown Patch / Pythium Blight / Ascochyta Turf Leaf Blight / Summer Patch / Red Thread / Rust Disease / Powdery Mildew / Dollar Spot / Fairy Rings / Snow Mold

This isn't a complete list by any means, but some of the more common ones that may be occasionally encountered.

Just to recap...

COMMON PREREQUISITE ISSUES WHICH MAKE YOUR LAWN MORE SUSCEPTIBLE TO LAWN DISEASES OR GENERALLY UNHEALTHY TURF

- Environmental stress, for example...
 - Excessively wet weather or extremely dry weather
 - Exceptionally hot or unseasonably cool temperatures

And more specifically...

- Improper watering
 - Either the lack of watering or serious drought conditions

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- Or excessive watering (especially heavy watering in late evenings)
- Excessive ongoing rainfall
- Nutrient deficiency
- Water assimilation problems
 - Due to excessive thatch layer within the grass
 - And/or compacted turf
- Lack of routine fertilizer regimen or too much of the wrong kind of fertilizer
- Improper mowing (usually cutting it too short especially during the hot summer months)
- Or simply, neglect of your lawn...
 - I know, we're all busy... It's true that there's not enough time in the day, it seems.
 - Yes, your grass will attempt to grow without you paying any attention to it, but it may not grow as well as it could or should, and you may encounter lots of weeds, or pests, or lawn diseases over time. Worst-case, your grass may be overtaken by weeds, or become thinned-out or simply dry out and die.
 - That can be avoided. You don't have to be spending every moment of your spare time babysitting your lawn, or manicuring it. However, with a few good lawn care maintenance routines and a good fertilizer and weed control regimen in place, you could have a very nice lawn on your property.

*** At Scott's Quality Lawn Care, we specialize in helping make our clients' lawns, the envy of their neighbours!**

***** 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 list of available articles on next page...

"Your Home Turf Advantage"

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...

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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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