



Ascochyta Leaf Blight on Lawns

Stress resulting from hot, dry summer conditions increases the potential for lawns to be afflicted by *Ascochyta* leaf blight. This disease is common when a cool, wet spring (like our recent June conditions) is followed immediately by hot summer conditions. *Ascochyta* leaf blight is most severe when the turf becomes stressed due to a combination of high heat and improper irrigation – insufficient amount, improper frequency, or poor coverage. Brown wheel-tracks and footprints may appear where mowing or foot traffic cause additional stress, leading to the incorrect assumption that the disease has been “tracked” onto the lawn from another location. The disease can be diagnosed by examining individual leaves, which die back from the tip. Affected leaves become bleached and pinched in appearance; the entire leaf will often die back to the ground. Small, dark fruiting bodies appear as specks on damaged leaves. Severe infections may cause large straw-colored patches to appear in the lawn, usually in areas where irrigation coverage is poor.

Fortunately this disease rarely kills turf, as the crown and root system are usually not damaged. However, prolonged stress due to poor irrigation coverage may cause a loss of turf in these areas. Consistent and correct watering, repair of malfunctioning irrigation components, or a soaking rain will encourage the turf to recover. Fungicide use does not seem to accelerate turf recovery. For pictures and additional information on the disease, go to this URL:

<http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/garden/02901.html>