



MASTER GARDENER

COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION

Year Round Gardening

Ascochyta Leaf Blight in Lawns

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If all of the sudden you notice some large, straw-colored patches of seemingly dead grass, your lawn may be infected with *Ascochyta* leaf blight. This is a fungal disease which effects bluegrass, fescue and perennial rye grass lawns.

It frequently appears in early summer, during the first warm days. It is more prevalent after a cool rainy spring, just like we had this year. At a distance the 'dead' areas appear to be uniformly tan, but a closer look will reveal some green blades among the patches. Some of these green blades may be bleached at the top 1/3, and you may see some white banding in the green sections.



Photo courtesy of Freddie Bogardus

You may see some white or brown fungal bodies, if you have a hand lens these will be flask shaped under magnification. The patches will be irregular in shape, and can be quite large. The lawn may look like it is suffering from drought stress, despite adequate watering.

This all sounds really bad, but do not despair. This is a disease that only effects the leaf, not the crown or the roots. It rarely does permanent damage to the lawn. The treatment is to follow good lawn care practices, recovery will generally occur within a couple of

weeks. Fungicides are available but because onset is so sudden, and recovery fairly quick, generally they are not of much practical value.

Treatment of the infected turf is generally to follow good turf management guidelines, specifically:

- Do not overwater.
- Make sure your mower blade is sharp, and mow no shorter than 2 ½" to 3 ",
- Do not mow more frequently than necessary.
- Do not mow when grass is wet.
- Do not overfertilize the lawn.
- It neither harms nor helps to remove the grass clipping when you mow. In general, the recommendation is to not remove the clippings unless the grass is very long, or very weedy.

For more information on Aschochyta Leaf Blight look at CSU Extension Fact sheet 2.901 Aschochyta Leaf Blight on Turf (<https://extension.colostate.edu/topic-areas/yard-garden/aschochyta-leaf-blight-of-turf-2-901/>)

For general lawn care information look at CSU Extension Fact Sheet 7.202 Lawn Care (<https://extension.colostate.edu/topic-areas/yard-garden/lawn-care-7-202/>)

When you have questions, Colorado State University Extension has research-based answers. The Help Desk is open at 17 N. Spruce St. Hours are 9 a.m. to noon and 1 to 4 p.m. Mondays and Wednesdays. Call 520-7684 or email CSUmq2@elpasoco.com.