

Ascochyta Blight



Ascochyta leaf spot symptoms may develop throughout the growing season but are more common during hot, dry periods that were preceded by cool, rainy conditions. The fungus is typically most active when daytime temperatures are above 85 degrees Fahrenheit. Large irregular patches of turf rapidly turn a straw-color and appear dead. The overall appearance of the disease may resemble drought stress, except that the symptoms of Ascochyta blight appear quickly (i.e. sometimes overnight). Although the blighting within an area appears complete from a distance, healthy leaves are interspersed within the patch. Many grasses are susceptible, but Kentucky bluegrass, tall fescue and perennial ryegrass are the most common victims. Don't panic, grass with leaf blight is rarely seriously injured since the fungus doesn't attack the crowns or roots. This disease usually does not usually kill the grass, but, some turf thinning may occur under severe outbreaks. Fungicides are ineffective in controlling this disease and are NOT recommended. Moderating temperatures usually bring control of the disease. Recovery may take several weeks to a month for a severe outbreak, even with cooler temperatures, rain and sufficient irrigation. The disease rarely occurs in the fall and affected turf generally recovers completely during the fall months. In many cases neighboring lawns looked healthy and green.

Ascochyta is typically seen in lawns with shallow roots. Maintaining a vigorous lawn is the best prevention against Ascochyta leaf spot. Core aerate in the spring or fall to reduce or prevent thatch build up and stimulate root growth. Keep mower blades sharp. Mow when the grass is dry to avoid spreading spores. Use a balanced fertilization program.

