

# HOME GROUNDS FACT SHEET

CORNELL

Cooperative Extension  
Nassau County



Nassau County  
Horticulture Program  
Eisenhower Park  
East Meadow, NY 11554  
516 228-0426

## Dollar Spot of Turfgrass

This disease name is derived from the dead straw-colored spots about the size of a silver dollar on close cut bentgrass



putting greens. It is seen in low fertility turf in early June/July. Dollar spot may persist from early summer until early fall. Its incidence seems to be higher in seasons with low rainfall, presumably from the adverse effect of low soil moisture on host plants. It occurs on Kentucky bluegrass, annual bluegrass, bentgrasses and fine fescues.

### Symptoms

The pattern of symptoms depends largely on mowing practices. Under close mowing conditions, the circular straw-colored spots (2"-3" in diameter) are distinctly outlined in the early stages of disease development. With higher cutting heights, the bleached turf spots are irregularly shaped.

In the early morning when dew is still on the grass, a white cobwebby growth of the fungus may be seen over the spot. Spots coalesce to cover large areas when the disease becomes severe.

On individual grass blades the invaded tissues are water soaked and dark colored. Characteristic hour glass lesions turn light tan to straw-colored with a reddish-brown border. They first occur randomly on the leaf, then frequently extend across the entire blade. Grass dies back from tips.

### Disease Cycle

The fungi, *Lanzia* sp. and *Moellerodiscus* sp., survive unfavorable periods as dormant mycelium in infected plants. Fungal movement is brought about by equipment, people, animals, wind or water. When daytime temperatures reach the 60° to 80°F. range, the dormant mycelium grows from infected leaves to nearby healthy leaves, causing new infections.

If nighttime conditions become cool and dry soon after infection occurs, or if control measures are exercised quickly, infection may not progress beyond scattered leaf lesions. If the grass is growing rapidly, the

problem may disappear after one or two mowings. If favorable weather (warm nights with dew forming on leaves) persists after infection and if control is not achieved, entire grass plants may be killed and typical "dollar spots" may appear on the turf.

### Integrated Pest Management (IPM)

#### Considerations

IPM is a common sense approach to pest control and plant care. It employs a number of measures to prevent, control or reduce plant problems. These include using resistant plant varieties, proper plant selection and placement, good aftercare and biological and/or mechanical controls. As a last resort, after all other remedies have been explored, a pesticide\* that is least toxic to people and natural predators, can be considered. Prior to using any pesticides, plants should always be monitored for the degree of infestation and a sensible control measure considered.

\* A pesticide is a substance that kills, or attempts to kill, a particular pest, e.g. **insecticide**, **fungicide**, **herbicide**, etc.

#### Cultural Control

Mow grasses at the recommended maximum height, if possible. Try not to remove more than 1/3 of the leaf surface in any one mowing if you have had dollar spot. Maintain adequate soil moisture, but avoid sprinkling in the evening. Do not overwater. The incidence of dollar spot is lower on turfgrasses maintained with adequate nitrogen than on nitrogen-deficient turf. The use of natural organic fertilizers and composts has been shown to reduce disease severity by raising soil microbe population.

Varieties of bluegrasses and fescues differ in susceptibility to dollar spot. Bluegrasses that exhibit greater resistance include the improved varieties Adelphi, America, Bonnieblue, Bristol, Eclipse, Glade Midnight, Princeton, Ram I. Fine fescues are: Biljart, Brigade, Reliant, Scaldis, Waldina, and Warwick. Perennial ryegrasses are Manhattan II and Saturn.

#### Chemical Control

Many fungicides are available for dollar spot control. Chemical pesticides are available. If you choose to use chemical pesticides, contact your local Cooperative Extension office for specific recommendations.

C-2-26 MTC:re reviewed TTY 1/03

*Building Strong and Vibrant New York Communities*

Cornell Cooperative Extension provides equal program and employment opportunities. NYS College of Agriculture and Life Sciences, NYS College of Human Ecology, and NYS College of Veterinary Medicine at Cornell University, Cooperative Extension associations, county governing bodies, and U.S. Department of Agriculture, cooperating.