



Moss & Mushrooms in Home Lawns

Moss

Many lawns in New Hampshire contain moss and/or algae. Moss is often found growing in shady spots in acidic, infertile, poorly-drained soils. Although mosses don't directly damage lawn grasses, they do compete for space and over time can dominate sections of a lawn.

Mosses are small green plants that have a mass of fine stems and shallow roots. Generally, moss cannot invade a vigorous, healthy lawn. Any attempts to control moss will be only temporary unless the basic conditions (shade, poor drainage, acid soil) that allowed moss to grow in the first place have been corrected.

Some homeowners discover that mosses make a very attractive ground, maintenance-free ground cover in the areas they are well adapted for. However, if you want to control moss on your lawn, try some of these suggestions:

Non-Chemical Control

- Maintain good soil fertility and pH values that favor dense, vigorous turf growth. Have the soil tested to determine lime and fertilizer needs. Liming alone isn't recommended as a short-term control measure.
- Physically remove small patches of moss with a flat edge shovel.
- Improve drainage. If necessary, correct wet conditions using tile drainage.
- Increase light penetration and air circulation. Trim low-branched trees for better light penetration and air movement. You may find it necessary to remove the least desirable trees.
- Use a shade-tolerant grass such as fine-leaf fescues. However, if direct sunlight doesn't reach the ground during the day, plant a ground cover instead of grass.
- Cultivate compacted soils. Reduce compaction by aerating soil with a machine that removes plugs of soil. Improve drainage in fine-textured soils by cultivating and adding large amounts of organic matter and sand.
- Avoid excessive irrigation. Shaded areas where moss usually predominates require less watering than sunny locations.

Chemical Control

The following products will help control moss:

Copper sulfate—Apply at the rate of 3 to 5 ounces per 1,000 square feet, or use a copper fungicide according to label recommendations.

Ferrous sulfate—Apply iron sulfate at the rate of 2 to 3 ounces in 5 gallons of water per 1,000 square feet

Mushrooms

Mushrooms (some of which may also be called toadstools or puffballs) live on organic matter in the soil. The mushroom is the above-ground reproductive structure of a fungus. In wet weather mushrooms will often sprout overnight. Most mushrooms don't damage the lawn but may people find them unsightly.

There is no practical or permanent way to eliminate mushrooms. However, the easiest temporary solution is simply to mow them off. Annual de-thatching to reduce the organic matter buildup also helps. When possible, remove any buried roots, stumps and lumber that mushrooms might live on.

***Stop!** This publication contains pesticide recommendations that are subject to change at any time. UNH Cooperative Extension provides these recommendations only as a guide. It is always the pesticide applicator's responsibility, by law, to read and follow all current label directions for the specific pesticide being used. Because of constantly changing labels and product registration, some of the recommendations offered in this publication may be outdated by the time you read them.*

Contact the NH Division of Pesticide Control at (603) 271-3550 to check registration status. If any information in these recommendations disagrees with the label, you must disregard the recommendations and follow the label directions. No endorsement is intended for products mentioned, nor criticism intended for products not mentioned.

*Store pesticides in their original containers in a locked cabinet or shed away from food. Dispose of unused pesticides or empty containers safely, according to NH regulations. If you suspect pesticide poisoning, call the New Hampshire Poison Control Center at **1-800-562-8236**.*

Fact sheet by John Roberts, UNH Extension Turf Specialist, revised and reformatted, 5/02

Visit our website: ceinfo.unh.edu

UNH Cooperative Extension programs and policies are consistent with pertinent Federal and State laws and regulations on non-discrimination regarding age, color, handicap, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veterans status.