

SNOW MOLD ON TURF

Supplement to Ornamental and Turf Manual

Snow mold is a recurring problem on fine turf in Vermont and other northern areas. Creeping bentgrass and annual bluegrass are especially susceptible to damage though virtually all cool season species may be damaged when conditions are favorable for disease development. Creeping Red Fescues appear to be most resistant to the snow molds.

Two types of snow mold are the primary pathogens of turf in Vermont; Gray Snow Mold caused by *Typhula incarnata* and Pink Snow Mold caused by *Michrodochium nivale*. These diseases may occur alone or in combination on turf.

Gray Snow Mold appears as irregularly circular bleached patches of turf up to 2 feet across. Soon after snow melt the diseased areas will be matted and contain white or gray fungal growth on the margins. The occurrence and severity of the disease will vary depending on weather conditions and snow conditions. *Typhula* is worst in winters where lasting snow falls on unfrozen turf. *Typhula* is most active in temperatures between 30°F and 55°F. Gray Snow Mold rarely kills turf. Recovery in home lawn situations is usually complete and can be aided by lightly raking the effected areas in the spring.

Pink Snow mold appears as bleached to reddish brown circular patches 1 to 8 inches in diameter. As the snow melts the pink mycelium is observable on the margins to the infected areas. Infection takes place when temperatures are below 60° F. Disease pressure becomes severe with prolonged periods of cool wet weather such as early spring and late fall. Pink Snow Mold can kill turfgrass in severe infections.

Cultural control methods include managing fertility to avoid lush growth going in to the snow mold season. Nitrogen fertility should be managed to allow turfgrass to harden off prior to lasting snowfall. Turfgrass should continue to be mowed in the fall until it stops growing. Care should be taken to avoid compacting snow on turf as well.

Chemical controls on a preventative basis are frequently required for creeping bentgrass turf. Where both snow molds occur together it is frequently necessary to combine contact fungicides with systemic fungicides to obtain adequate control. Specific control recommendations can be obtained from University Extension resources such as UMASS and Cornell.

(See reverse for color images of Pink and Gray Snow Mold)

GRAY SNOW MOLD



Infected Spots on Turf



Close-up View of Infected Turf

PINK SNOW MOLD



Patches Caused by Pink Snow Mold fungus
(provided by Dr. Eric B. Nelson, Cornell University)



Mycelium of Pink Snow Mold Fungus
(Provided by Dr. Eric B. Nelson, Cornell University)