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SLIME MOLD IN THE HOME LAWN

To many home owners, especially to those in the newer suburban areas, a beautiful lawn is considered an essential part of home landscape development. One of the common lawn troubles in Indiana that causes unnecessary concern to the home owner is "slime mold."

Slime mold commonly appears in late summer or early fall as a blue-gray incrustation on grass blades in scattered areas of the lawn. When rubbed between the fingers, it is found to be composed of a brown or blue-gray powdery mass, and is easily rubbed free from the grass blade. In addition to occurring on leaves and stems of Kentucky bluegrass, slime mold is also found on plantain, clover and dandelion.

Slime mold is caused by a soil inhabiting, non-parasitic fungus known as Physarum sp. Under certain environmental conditions, it grows out of soil onto whatever is available for support, and here it produces its spores or seeds.

There are several species of slime mold, each of which can result in discolored areas in the lawn. Certain species appear as small capsule-like spore masses that grow upright from the surface of the leaves on which they occur. At first these spore masses are steel gray in color and later turn black. At this stage the grass appears as if it has been dusted generously with carbon-black or soot. Other slime molds appear as thin, white, yellow or gray layers of slimy, paste-like material that covers the grass blades. Later, slime molds of this type dry to form bluish-gray, black or white powdery growths.

A well-watered, well-fertilized lawn is an ideal location for the growth of harmless slime molds. Slime molds may sometimes result in temporary shading out of scattered areas of the lawn. The blue-gray powdery masses are unsightly for a short two to three week period in July or August, but do not cause lasting damage. If left alone, the slime mold will soon disappear. However, slime mold can be removed by hosing the affected area with a strong stream of water. Home owners wishing to prevent recurrence of this trouble should dust, spray or sprinkle the lawn in the fall with a mixture of two parts calomel (mercurous chloride) plus one part corrosive sublimate (mercury bichloride), using four ounces of the mixture in sufficient water to uniformly cover 1000 square feet of lawn.
In the summer when slime mold appears, an application of a copper fungicidal dust or spray, such as is used for blight control on potatoes or tomatoes, will aid in preventing recurrence of the trouble. One pound of a six or seven percent copper dust per 1000 square feet dusted onto the lawn or 1 1/2-2 ounces of Tribasic Copper Sulfate dissolved in sufficient water to sprinkle 1000 square feet with a sprinkling can will be adequate.