WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
SPOKANE COUNTY EXTENSION
SPOKANE COUNTY

222 N Havana
Spokane WA 99202
(509) 477-2181
http://spokane-county.wsu.edu/spokane/eastside/
mastergardener@spokanecounty.org

C074

MOSS AND ALGAE

Mosses are small, simple, non-flowering plants. They are typically low growing and somewhat yellowish-green in color. They grow vigorously in the cool, moist weather of fall, winter, and spring, when lawn grasses are less able to compete.

CULTURAL CONDITIONS THAT ENCOURAGE MOSS

Low fertility
Fertilize at least three times a year with a balanced fertilizer of NPK in a 3-1-2 ratio. Avoid frequent use of high-nitrogen fertilizers.

High soil acidity
A soil test may be necessary to aid in correcting soil acidity.

Compacted soil
This soil condition makes penetration of air and water difficult. Soil particles are forced together, sealing the soil surface. Core aerate and leave removed cores on the ground to disintegrate.

Overwatering
Water deeply at least one inch per week. Don't water again until the first 1-2 inches of soil are dry.

Shade
Prune trees and shrubs where possible without ruining their esthetic value. This will allow filtered light to reach the turf.

Thatch
Thatch is the build-up of grass crowns and roots. Deep thatch can encourage insects and diseases. Core aeration discourages thatch. If lawn contains more than one-half inch of thatch, power raking may be necessary.

Wrong grass variety
Bluegrasses need sunlight. Fescues need shade. Use the correct variety or mixture for your site conditions.

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MOSS CONTROL

Evaluate and correct cultural conditions noted above. If chemical treatment is necessary for severe moss infestation, rake out as much moss as possible. Apply a moss control product containing ferrous sulfate. Chemical control will be temporary unless cultural conditions are corrected.

ALGAE CONTROL

Algae are small, primitive, single cell or filamentous green or blue-green plants that manufacture their own food. In thin turf they produce a thick, slimy, greenish to blackish scum over the soil surface. The scum dries to form a tough black curst that resists water penetration and later cracks and peels.

The same conditions that encourage moss also encourage algae. To control algae, follow the same cultural instructions for moss control. Fungicides registered for algae control can be used for severe algae infestation. Chemical control will be temporary unless cultural conditions are corrected.

Compiled by Levi Strauss. For more information, contact Master Gardeners at (509) 477-2181.
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