

Managing Fairy Rings and Mushrooms in Your Turf

Many of us have seen mushrooms integrated on a variety of lawns, throughout the city. These mushrooms live off decaying organic matter in the soil for example, decaying tree roots. As they develop, they form a ring, referred to as a fairy ring. (The name “fairy ring” comes from an old folk-tale where people believed that mushrooms appeared where fairies danced, the night before.)

Heavy rains increase the growth of the mushrooms. Aside from the fact that they are unsightly, fairy rings can cause serious damage to turf. The disease produces a dense fungal mat that prevents water from penetrating the grass roots. The rings form a fungus called *Marasmius oreades* which includes the vegetative part of a fungus called mycelium. The fungus lives underground and grows outward, in a circle.

As the mycelium grows, it grabs up all of the soil’s nutrients and ends up starving the grass. As a result, you’ll see a dark green circle or multiple circles ranging in size from just a few inches to more than 200 feet in diameter. Typically, mushrooms will develop around the edge of the infected area.

Despite the awful impact of fairy rings, here are some steps you can take, in order to promote a healthy lawn and minimize the occurrence of this awful disease:

1. Remove excess thatch and aerate compacted soils - Use a thatching rake and rake in one direction to prevent damaging grass roots – After removing the thatch layer, clean the lawn with a metal leaf rake
2. Encourage beneficial soil microbes by top dressing with a humus builder such as well aged manure or finished compost
3. Phosan 20 works on many disease outbreaks that impact turf. If you decide to use this approach, the formula is 1 Tablespoon/per gallon of water – thoroughly soak the affected area and repeat as necessary. One pint, diluted, will treat 6,400 square feet.
4. Top dress with a humus builder – for example, a well-aged manure or finished compost
5. Do not use fertilizers that are rich in nitrogen – they can mask the symptoms by causing the rest of your lawn to green up – try using a deep root feeder to aerate and irrigate deadly/dying rings
6. Gently remove mushrooms by giving them a tug and pulling them up – you may want to consider putting them in your compost pile – DO NOT ALLOW THEM TO REMAIN ON YOUR LAWN.
7. Fungicides have not yet been proven to be effective – they may temporarily suppress them because the decaying material may still be present
8. Once the disease appears it is very difficult to eliminate — there is NO natural control

9. Keep lawns well-watered

10. Always think water, aerate, fertilize and MOW!!

Fairy rings and mushrooms in our lawn, turf and grass are here to stay. Understanding their impact to our landscape and how to manage them the key to dealing with them and preventing their longevity.