



J&L Garden Center

The All Season Gift
and Garden Center

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Lawn Disease - 'Rust'

Have you ever walked through your lawn and noticed a reddish-brown, "Rusty" dust on your shoes?

If so, your lawn is most likely infected with a disease commonly known as 'Rust'. Rust is a fairly common lawn disease that is caused by a fungus. It usually shows up in the late-summer and fall, once the growth of your grass slows down. Rust does not generally kill your entire lawn, but it does make your lawn look terrible for a while. Rust spores are also easily tracked into homes and onto carpets creating a stain. Rust is not harmful to either animals or humans. However, try to keep animals and children from walking through infected areas to prevent the spread of this disease and to prevent the unpleasant appearance and mess. Rust is definitely a nuisance.



Rust is not active every year. The fall weather conditions determine when, and how severe, rust will appear. Cool nights with heavy dew, followed by warm sunny days, stimulate the development of rust. Warm, cloudy days followed by hot sunny weather also stimulates rust to develop. Rust is most active during humid weather when night temperatures are 70°-75° F. followed by daytime temperatures of 80° to 90° F., especially when the dew remains on the blades of grass for extended periods of time after sunrise.

Rust usually starts in shaded areas first, during warm, humid weather. However, any grass that remains wet for long periods of time can start showing signs of rust. Watering too often, cool rainy days, lingering dew, prolonged rain (or sprinklers) followed by overcast skies, are all perfect growing conditions for rust.

Rust spores are very tiny, light weight and can be spread long distances by the wind. A cloud of reddish-orange dust can fill the air when the grass is mowed. Rust spores can also collect on lawn mowers, shoes, clothing, and on animal's paws. This means that rust can spread rapidly and even the best kept lawns can be infected easily.

Rust that is not quickly remedied can thin and damage good turf. Rust is not a disease that will kill your lawn, but it will weaken the lawn and damage it. When rust is very severe, the grass blades turn yellow, wither and die. Rust can also weaken the lawn enough to make it more susceptible to winter injury and snow mold.

Cultural Controls

Rust is most easily controlled by maintaining good lawn growth. **Fertilize adequately** - do not over fertilize your lawn, but the more often you mow your lawn, the faster you can remove the infected blades of grass. **Water infrequently** when the grass slows down in the fall and when the weather cools down. **Water in the morning** so the blades of grass can dry quickly in the morning sun. **Mow your lawn** a little higher and more frequently. Catch the clippings, do not just let the clippings fall back onto the lawn. **Wash your lawnmower** with a 10% bleach solution when moving from an infected area to a non infected area. **Wash your shoes** before entering an uninfected area of the lawn. Keep your pets off the infected areas to help prevent the further spread of this disease.

Chemical Controls

Fungicides are not usually needed in most situations. However, if you cannot control rust culturally, a preventative fungicide spray will help prevent the further spread of this disease. Spray with either **Bayleton** (*Greenlight Fungaway* or *Bonide Fungonil*) or **Daconil** (*Fertilome Lawn & Garden Fungicide*) fungicide at the first sign of this disease. Spray once or twice a month until the weather conditions stop the further spread of this disease. It does not help to spray the lawn with a fungicide once the soil temperature drops below 35° to 40° F.

