

Snow Mold

Early and late season disease

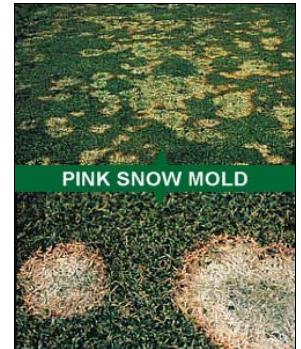
Snow molds are cold tolerant fungi that grow at freezing or near freezing temperatures. Snow molds can damage turfgrasses from late fall to spring and at snow melt or during cold, drizzly periods when snow is absent. It causes roots, stems, and leaves to rot when temperatures range from 25 to 60 F (-3 to 15 C). When the grass surface dries out and the weather warms, snow mold fungi cease to attack; however, infection can reappear in the area year after year.

Snow molds are favored by excessive early fall applications of fast release nitrogenous fertilizers, excessive shade, a thatch greater than 3/4 inch thick, or mulches of straw, leaves, synthetics, and other moisture-holding debris on the turf. Disease is most serious when air movement and soil drainage are poor and the grass stays wet for long periods, e.g., where snow is deposited in drifts or piles.

All turfgrasses grown in the Midwest are susceptible to one or more snow mold fungi. They include Kentucky and annual bluegrasses, fescues, bentgrasses, ryegrasses, bermudagrass, and zoysiagrasses with bentgrasses often more severely damaged than coarser turfgrasses.

There are two types of snow mold in the Midwest: gray or speckled snow mold, also known as Typhula blight or snow scald, and pink snow mold or Fusarium patch. The two types are found in the same geographical areas in the Midwest, including Illinois. Pink snow mold occurs farther south than gray snow mold

Snow mold appears on matted-down sections of the turf. Look closer and it looks like a fuzzy whitish substance on top of a matted-down spot or section. It may have a pink cast around the edge if it's starting to develop pink snow mold. As the lawn thaws, the crowns will be vulnerable coming out of dormancy. This can make severe damage if air circulation is poor, if the lawn was long going into dormancy, or has continued shade from trees and/or snow cover and stays damp in the spring. Pink snow mold appears generally after 60 days of snow coverage and is the more severe damaging snow mold. **You should lightly rake these areas to allow for air circulation, and to keep matted thatch from preventing grass growing through.**



Remember, you need to rake these matted-down areas, and make sure you do it as soon as the weather permits. In more severe cases where you see some pink, especially around the edge of a ring, you may need to call us out to assess if you need a special fungicide or some special recommendations. Some thinning may be impossible to avoid because of winter die-back. A spring Core Aeration is a good option to expand the roots if thin areas are present. **If you have matted down spots and you don't rake them out soon, it may be too late to avoid some kill spots.**

REMEMBER

Lightly rake to stimulate root growth and air circulation, and remove leaves and debris, pine needles, etc. When making first and last cut, cut at lowest recommended height. Complete directions in service packet (sent earlier).