Take-All Root Rot Disease

Take-All Root Rot or Take-All Disease is a disease that is a growing problem in Lowndes County and much of Georgia. This fungal disease is caused by the pathogen, *Gaeumannomyces graminis var. graminis* and can be as destructive as the scientific name is scary.

Take-All Disease is most active in the spring and fall and is most severe on St. Augustinegrass. This disease also affects Centipedegrass, Bermudagrass, and all other warm season turfgrasses. Once established, Take-All Disease is very difficult to control.

The first visual symptom of the disease is usually yellowing of individual blades of grass that are easy to pull out. Most people do not notice this and only begin to be concerned when the grass begins dying out.

Once you notice visible symptoms of the disease, it has been active for a few weeks destroying the turf's root system. The irregular pattern of grass dieback is one of the ways it can be distinguished from "Brown Patch", which is another common turf disease in the fall.

This naturally occurring disease begins on the roots. Infected roots will darken and can turn black before they rot off completely. Runners such as stolons and rhizomes will become infected next. The disease does not appear on the foliage when roots and stolons die, the foliage will die as well.

There is no silver bullet to stop Take-All Disease. If you irrigate your lawn your chances of having problems with Take-All Disease are much greater than those without a sprinkler system. This disease loves it when you water three or more times a week.

Cultural controls are the best way to manage Take-All disease. Turn your sprinklers off and water only when needed. Make sure your turf is cut to the proper height. St. Augustinegrass should be cut from 2-4 inches tall and Centipede should be cut 1-2 inches tall. Only remove 1/3rd of the grass blade at one cutting.

Take-All Disease prefers a pH above 6.5 so liming is not recommended. Use fertilizers that have slow release nitrogen and have as much potassium as nitrogen. This means the first and last number in the bag should be the same. Avoid high nitrogen applications in the fall.

Core aerating will help reduce thatch and compaction and relieve grass stress. Healthy turf may have the pathogen but may not show symptoms of the disease. UGA research has indicated that topdressing with ¼" of sphagnum peat moss or 2 pounds of manganese sulfate per thousand square feet may help suppress the disease.

After cultural measures have been taken, fungicide applications may be of benefit. Fall and early spring are the best times to apply fungicides. Fungicides such as Heritage, Banner Max, Bayleton, and Cleary's 3336 can help if used preventatively.

For more information on this disease go to the "Lowndes Extension Website" *http://www.ugaextension.com/lowndes/*, and click on Agriculture and Natural Resources, then on Horticulture. You will find a fact sheet on Take-All Disease.

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