

Lawns – How to Control Moss

Moss is perhaps the most common weed of neglected turf in high rainfall areas. Moss has a tremendous capacity for reproduction. It produces immense numbers of spores, each of which gives rise to a new moss plant if provided with a suitable moist environment. However, moss plants cannot compete with vigorous, healthy turfgrass. It is only when the grass is weakened by unfavourable growing conditions that moss becomes established and takes over. Conditions which contribute to a problem with moss include such factors as poor aeration, poor drainage, low fertility, high acidity and heavy shade. These are all conditions which reduce grass vigour but encourage growth and development of mosses. To control moss the approach must include treatment to eliminate the moss already established and cultural treatments to prevent re-colonization.

Chemical Control

Only one product is available for moss control: De-Moss. Be sure to follow all directions as stated on the label. Speak to a staff member for additional information.

Cultural Control

- Improve surface drainage. In addition, subsurface drainage tiles may need to be installed if water remains in puddles at the surface after irrigation or after a rain.
- Remove thatch. Buildup of dead organic matter forms a spongy layer that increases water retention and reduces grass vigour. Thatch can be removed by vigorous raking or the use of a vertical mower or dethatcher.
- Reduce compaction and increase aeration by spiking, slicing or aerifying with a mechanical aerator.
- Reduce shade if possible. Judicious pruning of trees and shrubs can make a difference to density of shade.
- Have soil tested using a Rapitest Soil Kit available at Murrays. Apply limestone if soil is acidic, at a rate of 100 lbs per 1000 ft². This application may be halved so that you apply half in the spring and half in the fall.
- Take care not to over-water. Irrigation may be necessary in dry periods to sustain grass vigour, but excessive water will have the reverse effect.
- Improve grass vigour by use of a balanced fertility program.
- Top dress lawn each fall with a top dress mixture of fine loam, compost or topsoil mixture and rake this over the lawn to spread it evenly.
- Take care in mowing. Mow frequently enough to remove not more than 1/3 of the top growth at mow time. Mow at a height appropriate for the grass species (one to two inches for fescues and bluegrass). Mowing too closely reduces grass vigour and eventually results in thinning of grass stand with consequent invasion by weeds including mosses.

