

Controlling Moss in Your Lawn

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Generally moss cannot invade a vigorous, healthy lawn. Moss can be a troublesome pest wherever the desirable turfgrass has been damaged. Presence of moss may be caused by lack of fertility, improper watering practices, too much shade, poorly drained or compacted soils, extremely acid soils, grass diseases, or any combination of these. Determine the problem; then correct it, if possible, before attempting to control the moss.

Various materials are available in farm and garden stores to kill moss, and by following labeled directions, good moss kills usually can be obtained by use of these materials. Unless the basic fault that allowed the moss to enter in the first place is corrected, the control will be incomplete or only temporary.

Lack of fertility is the most common cause for the growth of moss. Regular fertilizing will develop a healthy, vigorous turf. Apply enough fertilizer during the growth season to supply a total of 3 to 5 pounds of actual nitrogen per 1,000 square feet. This amount can be divided into three or more applications. The first should go on in the early spring, the second in June, and the third in August or September.

To insure a balanced nutrition for your lawn, use a complete fertilizer containing nitrogen, phosphorus, and potash at least once each year, preferably in the fall. Remember that clover is encouraged by phosphorus and potassium in the complete fertilizer. Constant use of high-analysis phosphorus and potash fertilizer is often the cause for invasion of clover in lawns. Simple nitrogen fertilizers can provide the fertility requirements of the grass in spring and summer.

Moss is a shallow-rooted plant and any practices that restrict deep grass root penetration favor moss development. Infrequent heavy irrigations will encourage deeper

grass root development and will dry the surface moss roots.

Ammonium sulfate can be used to "burn" the moss out. Apply 8 to 10 pounds per 1,000 square feet, and do not water for several days. The grass may be damaged temporarily, but it will come back rapidly with the added fertility from the ammonium sulfate.

Copper sulfate or ferrous ammonium sulfate can be used as a spray to kill moss. For the most effective control, dilute these materials according to the manufacturer's directions. They can be applied any time during the season. Ferrous ammonium sulfate applied as a dry formulation at the rate of 10 pounds per 1,000 square feet is also effective.

If soil water movement is restricted by accumulations of thatch and mats of old clippings on the surface, renovation of the surface with power rakes, renovators, or vertical mowers will promote a stronger grass growth. Moss can be raked out by hand or mechanically removed by power renovators. Reseed if the grass is gone, and follow a regular fertilizer and watering program.

Traffic during wet weather may cause compactions that can weaken the grass. Aerification during spring or fall months can loosen the soil and promote better grass growth. Several types of machines which remove plugs from the soil are available. They are superior to spikers, machines which drive holes without removing a core.

Winter disease-damaged areas should be reseeded early in the spring to prevent new infestations of moss. Proper disease control methods when the disease is first active will also reduce moss infestation.

Once you have disposed of moss, keep it out by growing a healthy, vigorous turf.



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