FS 10
Revised June 1973

Controlling Moss on Roofs

Moss is a simple form of plant growth that thrives in damp, shaded locations. It is likely to be found on the north slopes of roofs and roofs shaded by overhanging trees.

Control measures include removal of overhanging branches, scraping away as much moss as possible, and spraying the area with chemical. Spraying is most effective when the moss is actively growing, and when rain is not likely for several days. Moss grows vigorously during the rainy seasons—fall, winter, and spring. Very little growth occurs during the summer.

Recommended Materials

Coppers

Some proprietary copper formulations are used for moss control. Follow manufacturer's directions.

Copper sulfate (blue stone)

Copper is effective when sprayed on moss at the rate of 1/4 to 1/2 ounce per 10 gallons of water. It is corrosive to metal eave troughs, downspouts, metal spray equipment, and they should be washed thoroughly with water immediately after treatment. Copper sulfate solution has a good residual effect, depending on type of roof, amount of penetration, and amount of rainfall.

Zinc

Some very effective zinc formulations are available for moss control. Follow manufacturer's directions.

Zinc galvanized or copper flashings and ridges

A galvanized or copper ridge will be effective for about 10 to 15 feet down from the ridge on most roofs. Normal corrosion from bare copper wires, stretched about every 10 feet horizontally along the butt ends of shingles, will provide some moss control.

Zinc chloride

Spray moss with a 10% solution. Zinc chloride is corrosive to metals and injurious to plants.

Table salt

Spray the surface of moss with a 10% to 20% solution or sprinkle dry table salt when moss is wet. Table salt does not have a residual effect, and is not as effective as some of the other materials. Table salt is also corrosive to metals and injurious to plants.

Pentachlorophenol

Caution: Do not use pentachlorophenol on home roofs. Use on roofs of storage or industrial buildings or sheds. Use only where the pentachlorophenol solution or fumes will not injure plants or make the building uninhabitable. Pentachlorophenol is toxic to plants and can be toxic to man if used improperly. Oil solutions should not be used on asphalt roofs. Follow the manufacturer's directions carefully.

Pentachlorophenol should be dissolved in oil carriers such as diesel oil. Solutions containing not more than 5% by weight of pentachlorophenol will kill moss and prevent its growth for some time. The solution can be purchased in ready-to-use form or in a concentrate that can be diluted easily to the proper concentration.

Warning: Some roofing materials are discolored or softened by pentachlorophenol.

Sodium pentachlorophenate (5% solution)

Caution: Do not use sodium pentachlorophenate on home roofs. Use on roofs of storage or industrial buildings or sheds. Use only where the sodium pentachlorophenate solution or fumes will not injure plants or make the building uninhabitable. Sodium pentachlorophenate is toxic to plants and can be toxic to man if used improperly. Follow the manufacturer's directions carefully.

To prepare 5 gallons of 5% solution, mix 2 pounds of sodium pentachlorophenate powder in 5 gallons of water. Reports indicate that sodium pentachlorophenate solutions may be used safely on asphalt roofs.

Other weed-killer compounds

Some compounds normally used as weed killers are also effective for moss control. Follow the manufacturer's directions and precautions for use.

Cautions

Use extreme care when applying the materials mentioned above. Keep them away from children and animals and prevent contamination of plants. Be sure that spray does not fall or drift onto plants,

OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION SERVICE

Extension Service, Oregon State University, Corvallis, Joseph R. Cox, director. This publication was produced and distributed in furtherance of the Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914. Extension work is a cooperative program of Oregon State University, the U. S. Department of Agriculture, and Oregon counties.

and that spray solution is not carried down drainspouts to injure plants in foundation plantings. Use of a sprinkler can for applying solutions may reduce the drift hazard.

Remember that several of the chemicals recommended for control of moss are very corrosive to metal. Be sure gutters and downspouts are clear, so solutions washing off treated roofs do not stand in troughs. After treating the roof thoroughly, flush gutters and drainspouts with fresh water to prevent corrosion and costly replacement. Equipment can be protected by adding 2 tablespoons of household ammonia to a gallon of water for the final flushing through the sprayer.

Handle Pesticides Safely

Chemical poisoning statistics compiled by the Oregon Poison Control Registry at the University of Oregon Medical School indicate that most accidents with pesticides involve misuse, improper storage, and inadequate disposal methods.

It is wise to treat all of these chemicals as poisons both from a dermal (skin) or an oral exposure. Take care to avoid spills or contact with skin. Wear rubber gloves. Do not leave these materials unattended while the spraying is under way.

Store pesticides in their original labeled containers out of sight and reach of children or pets. Storage under lock and key is the most foolproof method. It is particularly important to keep these chemicals separate from foods or feed.

Dispose of empty containers safely. When containers are empty, rinse them thoroughly, pour the rinse water into the sprayer, and use the rinse water in the spray program. Empty, rinsed containers can be disposed of in normal disposal methods, including the garbage can.

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