

BEAUTY AND ORDER

JULY 2016

Is that brown patch, or just a brown patch?

As many of you know, there is a common fescue disease called “brown patch” caused by a fungal disease with the scientific name *Rhizoctonia solani*.

The fact that scientific names are in Latin is certainly unfortunate, as pronunciation is difficult to say the least.



RANDY JAMES,
consulting
arborist /
pathologist
and founder
of Growing
Concerns Inc.

One tip I have learned is if you are unsure of the pronunciation, just say it quietly and quickly and no one will challenge you. Even if they know the correct pronunciation, they

will think they just misheard you. Hey, you gotta do what you gotta do.

Equally unfortunate as the scientific name is the common name. Can we get a little less vague than saying you have “brown patch?”

When temperatures hit 100 degrees, every lawn has brown patch. That’s like saying “the thingamajig over there at what’s his face’s house.” Not much help in diagnosing the problem.

This year is especially troublesome as the cool and wet late May/early June promoted shallow turf rooting and was followed by the heavens firing up the one million BTU furnace in mid/late June, leading to all kinds of brown patch, not just the brown patch we plant people refer to when we use the term.

While we have written about this

issue in past years, after numerous calls from clients suspecting they have a disease that requires treatment, I thought some would be interested in a quick, telltale way to separate brown patch from just a brown patch.

The fungal version nearly always creates lesions on the leaf of fescue as depicted in the image. If you pick a few leaves from the patch at the margin where brown grass meets green grass turf and look closely, you will find these multiple similar lesions of varied sizes.

Occasionally, we plant nerds will cut a sliver of the lesion, mount it on a microscope slide and under 100-times, observe the individual, unique fungal hyphae in the cell tissue.

At that point, we have moved from guessing by the symptom, to the sign. It is one thing to see what looks like damage the “bug” caused, and quite another to see the bug itself.

If you ever get that interested in a fungus on turf, just give us a call, and I would be happy to fire up the microscope so you can take a look.

And don’t worry, I won’t tell your friends what you do in your spare time!

Now that you see it, what do you do? Control of the pathogen that causes brown patch is rarely suggested as the turf usually recovers when the weather cools, but until then, watering in the morning versus the evening is helpful in reducing the spread.



The fungal version of brown patch nearly always creates lesions on the leaf of fescue, as depicted above.

For more information about Growing Concerns and our residential landscape management services, visit our website at www.growingconcerns.com



GROWING CONCERNS

LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

www.growingconcerns.com

Our Mission: To serve and encourage property owners by creating and protecting landscape beauty and order.