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NEWS RELEASE FROM THE OFFICE OF:

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Watch Out For Gray Leaf Spot In St. Augustinegrass!

Have you ever noticed small spots on the leaf blades of your St. Augustinegrass? It could be a sign that gray leaf spot has infected your lawn. Gray leaf spot develops rapidly and can be especially troublesome in shaded areas.

Gray leaf spot is a fungus that attacks St. Augustinegrass, as well as several other turfgrass species including perennial ryegrass, bermudagrass, fescue, and centipedegrass. It develops rapidly with warm temperatures and abundant moisture, and it is capable of causing severe damage to your lawn. Leaf spots first appear as tiny brown to ash-colored spots (lesions) with purple margins that enlarge and become diamond-shaped. In severe cases of gray leaf spot, lesions develop on sheaths and stems and the leaves wither and die. Turfgrass may have a burned or scorched appearance resulting from death or spotting of the leaf blades. Under these conditions the disease causes serious thinning of St. Augustine turf.

Factors that promote gray leaf spot development include: high nitrogen fertilization, high humidity, 80 to 90 degree days and above 70 degree nights, shaded areas, herbicide damaged areas, compacted soils, excessive thatch, and drainage problems.

To reduce the severity of gray leaf spot, avoid applications of soluble nitrogen fertilizers on moderately shaded lawns during summer months. Herbicide applications which may weaken St. Augustine grass should also be avoided on shaded lawns. Apply water to the lawn in the early morning only when water is needed. Avoid late afternoon and evening watering which keeps the leaf surface moist for long periods. Grass clippings should be removed where gray leaf spot is a problem.

Fungicides that are labeled for homeowner use include: Immunox, Heritage, Eagle and Banner Maxx. The treatments should be on a 14 day interval and should be treated at least twice. These fungicides should be available at most nurseries, garden centers and feed stores.

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