Lawn Issues
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Heat and drought stress have led to lawn problems. In most cases, allowing turfgrass to grow out of the damage or overseeding bare areas in late August is the best course of action at this time of year.

Aschochyta leaf blight is a fungal disease that mostly affects Kentucky bluegrass but can occur on tall fescue. Symptoms are large areas of turf turning tan. On close inspection, the tips of leaf blades appear bleached and die from the tip down. Symptoms appear suddenly and seem quite severe, often affecting large areas of turf; however, this disease seldom causes permanent damage.

While it is a fungal disease, Aschochyta is associated with stress from drought, low fertility or other factors. Fungicides are rarely used for control as turfgrass grows out of it and recovers fairly quickly without treatment.

Summer patch is a disease that affects older Kentucky Bluegrass (KBG) lawns. Symptoms are circular patches of dead turf with a healthy tuft of grass in the center and brown roots; typically seen in full sun or high stress areas near sidewalks and driveways.

The summer patch fungus infects turfgrass roots during spring. Symptoms appear during the hot, dry parts of summer after the fungus has caused roots to decline so they are unable to efficiently take up water.

Newer KBG cultivars and tall fescue are resistant to summer patch. The long-term solution is to over seed with newer cultivars or convert lawns to fescue. Cultural practices that might reduce summer patch include core aeration, correct irrigation, and proper fertilization. If fungicides are tried, they need to be applied during the spring infection period of May and must reach the roots.

Concern about white grubs is common at this time of year. While I have not seen much grub damage in a number of years, its wise to monitor turf for signs of grub feeding. These include areas in full sun or near pavement turning brown, which can also be due to drought, and birds feeding in lawns. If signs appear, pull back the sod in the area to check for the cream-colored, c-shaped grubs with reddish heads.

If 8 grubs can be found per square feet, an insecticide treatment may be justified. If fewer grubs are found, correct watering and fertilization to help turf regrow roots eaten by grubs can be a sufficient management method.

If a lawn had a preventive grub treatment in June or early July, it should be fine. But as preventive treatments are only recommended on lawns with a recent history of grub damage, most lawns should not have been treated. The reason for this recommendation is to help avoid resistance in grubs to insecticides and avoid harm to beneficial insects.

Lawn yellowing is an annual summer problem. It is due to iron chlorosis or a lack of iron in plants. Most soils have adequate iron, but high pH or alkaline soils combined with hot soil temperatures and continuously wet soils from automatic irrigation interferes with iron uptake. This is why we only see yellowing during summer. If it were a lack of iron in the soil, the lawn would be yellow all season.

To treat for iron chlorosis, allow soil to dry between irrigations and apply a foliar application of iron, such as iron sulfate. Do not water the iron in or it will be less effective. Follow label directions for the rate to apply. If the lawn has not been core aerated recently, consider having this done in September to relieve soil compaction and promote root health.