

Spring Dead Spot in Bermudagrass



A Severe case of Spring Dead Spot

If you have a Bermudagrass lawn, you may notice many brown circles appearing as your grass is trying to green-up in the spring. No, it's not crop circles, but rather a very common and troublesome turf disease called Spring Dead Spot. Spring Dead Spot is a turf disease which is unique only to Bermudagrass, especially certain cultivars. It is caused by a common fungus, which actually infects the turf during the fall. The symptoms do not actually appear until the following spring, as circular dead areas up to several feet in diameter. The surrounding grass will be green and healthy, only to be infiltrated with a few up to

many round dead areas, sometimes filled with weeds, with little healthy turf to help crowd them out. If you have a severe case of Spring Dead Spot, the spots will re-appear every season, often in the same place. Certain varieties of Bermudagrass are more prone to this disease than others. Hard winters seem to increase the severity of the disease in the spring. It has nothing to do with whether you use a lawn service or not. The disease seems to be most severe in bermudagrass lawns which are from 3-12 years old. As the lawn becomes older, the severity of the disease seems to lessen.

The dead areas will eventually fill in with Bermudagrass as summer progresses. It often takes much of the summer for this to happen though, so your lawn may not look real good for much of the early summer. You can speed up the fill-in by filling the circles with a thin ½" layer of good, black topsoil. This will help the surrounding grass fill in much quicker. You could also dig out the spots, replace with some good soil, and place a fresh piece of Bermudagrass sod on top. Try to match up with the same variety of Bermudagrass you now have, which may be difficult.

There is a preventative treatment program we can do in the fall, which has been shown to lessen the severity of Spring Dead Spot the following spring. A special turf fungicide named Velista can be applied at a fairly specific time—at the first onset of cooler fall weather, along with a follow-up treatment 4 weeks later. This is when the fungus infects the turf. We apply two treatments, spaced about 4 weeks apart, which is the current recommendation from Oklahoma State University. In spring we will take pictures of where the dead spots are, so that in fall we can concentrate where to apply the fungicide in the lawn. At



Spring Dead Spot in the spring.

LawnAmerica, we have treated many lawns in mid-September into late October. It has shown some fairly good results, with a decrease in the number of spots and quicker fill-in the following spring. Just because we apply the fungicide, it's not a guarantee that you'll have no spots the following spring though. If



Same lawn the following spring after fall fungicide treatments.

you have a severe case of Spring Dead Spot, we would recommend you try this, and see if it works for your lawn. The fungicide cost is more than most other products we use, so our fee is 2.1 X your normal lawn treatment price for the two fall treatments. For example, if your regular treatment is \$50, the fungicide service will be \$105, and covers both treatments.