Updated February 2019

Benton County Master Gardener Problem Diagnosis Scenario #22

(Moss in Lawns)

Problem
My lawn is being taken over by moss.

Description
Large parts of the lawn are mossy, and the grass is dying out in that area.

Questions/Answers

Question: Do you fertilize or lime the lawn?
Answer: Only minimal fertilizer. Never lime.

Question: Is this problem occurring primarily in a shady area of your yard?
Answer: Yes.

Question: Have you had the soil tested for pH and available nutrients?
Answer: Only for pH, the soil is moderately acidic.

Question: What solutions have you tried so far?
Answer: Nothing.

Reference(s):

Refer to: https://catalog.extension.oregonstate.edu/em9175/html

(and associated links)

Diagnosis:
Moss in lawn: a result of Willamette Valley climate conditions. Most often moss invades lawns that lack vigor; this lack can be a result of low fertility, high acidity, shade, wet soil or insect damage.

Recommendations:

Cultural: Healthy turf grass can better compete with moss. Adjust soil pH to 6.0 to 6.5 and fertilize regularly. If possible, increase the amount of sunlight on the lawn by selectively pruning or removing trees. Select a shade-specific seed mix and over seed the shady areas. Dethatching can be helpful if done in the spring (March or April) so that the lawn has time to regain vigor during the summer when moss is at a competitive disadvantage.

Chemical: It is possible to chemically control with an Iron (Fe) compound. (Note: Iron (Fe) will stain concrete.) Cryptocidal soaps are another option for controlling moss.

Updated February 2019

#22