

HOME GROUNDS FACT SHEET

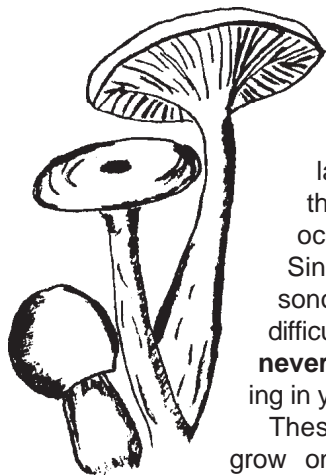


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Mushrooms and Toadstools on Lawns



Mushrooms, puffballs or toadstools may become a nuisance in lawns at certain times of the year. They usually occur during wet periods. Since identification of poisonous mushrooms is very difficult, it's imperative that you **never** eat any that are growing in your lawn and landscape.

These fleshy fungi usually grow on decomposing organic matter in the soil. The organic matter may be a buried stump, root or board. These fungi are good wood rotters. They may also be breaking down organic matter that is mixed with the soil.

There is a specific fungus growth of toadstools known as Fairy Ring. Grass just inside or outside the circular band where the fungus is acting is often stimulated to rapid growth with a dark green color. Fairy Ring circles may vary in size from one or two feet to 50 feet or more in diameter. Sometimes, there will be many mushrooms or toadstools in the area of dead grass.

Common puffballs are another fungal growth which have been seen by almost everyone at one time or another. They may occur singly or in an arc or cluster in a mild case of fairy ring. They are one of the largest and most visually stunning mushrooms, able to reach weights of a few pounds and measuring as much as 6 feet in circumference. They may occur in the lawn or near downed logs or stumps in late summer or fall. They have a thin outer covering which breaks away when ripe to release a dry mass of powdery spores. This is the origin of the name "devil's snuffbox."

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Considerations

IPM is a common sense approach to pest control and plant care. It employs a number of measures to prevent, control or reduce plant problems. These include using resistant plant varieties, proper plant selection and placement, good aftercare and biological and/or mechanical controls. As a last resort, after all other remedies have been explored, a pesticide* that is least toxic to people and natural predators, can be considered. Prior to using any pesticides, plants should always be monitored for the degree of infestation and a sensible control measure considered.

* A pesticide is a substance that kills, or attempts to kill, a particular pest, e.g. **insecticide**, **fungicide**, **herbicide**, etc.

Control

Although no satisfactory controls with fungicides have been developed, symptoms of Fairy Ring can be masked by removing cores, thorough watering and moderate fertility. The fungus often grows so deep in the soil that chemicals do not penetrate to the center of the infection. They usually disappear when all the wood or organic matter has been completely decayed.

Most homeowners are satisfied to destroy toadstools or break them up with a rake or mower and let it go at that.

Puffballs, while not especially poisonous, should be removed by being carefully dug out when young and firm, prior to spore dispersal. Pressure exerted by growing puffballs and other mushrooms is often great enough to break through strong materials. These include sidewalks, asphalt driveways, drains, and swimming pool liners.

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