

## Snow Mold

**Symptoms:** Damage from snow mold fungi usually becomes apparent as the snow melts and exposes the grass in late winter. Snow mold symptoms consist of roughly circular patches (at least 3 to 12 inches) of dead and matted grass blades. In severe cases, these patches coalesce and may not be recognizable as individual circles. Just after snow melt and while the grass remains moist, it may be possible to differentiate between the two common types of snow mold. The web-like mycelium of pink snow mold (*Microdochium nivale*) may initially look white and gray in color. The mycelium of both types of fungi will disappear quickly as the grass dries. A useful identifying characteristic of gray snow mold is the presence of tiny brown to black mycelial masses (sclerotia) on the blades and in the leaf sheaths of infected plants. These survival structures vary in size and color, becoming smaller and darker as they dry. The pink snow mold fungus does not produce sclerotia.

**Disease Cycle:** Snow mold fungi remain inactive during the warm months when other disease fungi are most active. They survive in thatch and on plants as sclerotia (gray snow mold) or as mycelial threads (pink snow mold). In the fall, *Typhula* species sometimes produce small, white or pinkish, club-shaped spore-producing structures that may be seen among grass blades in lawns that have not been recently mowed. They grow from sclerotia that were produced in the previous winter for survival over the summer. As cool, wet weather develops, the fungi begin to grow and infect grass plants. Like all living organisms, these fungi require moisture to survive. The cold, dry air of winter prevents active growth. The shelter of leaves, snow or any other cover on the grass maintains the necessary moisture for growth. Optimal conditions for snow mold activity occur when snow falls suddenly and remains on ground that has not yet frozen. In such cases, grass is often still lush, providing an excellent food base for the fungi.

**Cultural Management:** Because snow mold activity is greatest beneath covers that maintain moist conditions, all leaves or other materials should be removed from the lawn. In addition, it is best to avoid piling snow deeply along sidewalks and driveways where it will form a long-lasting snow bank. In large lawn areas, the strategic placement of snow fences and landscape plants may prevent deep drifting of snow. In the spring, rake away dead and matted foliage from damaged areas to allow the new growth to begin.

**Chemical Management:** Fungicide applications for snow mold are not recommended for home lawns except in extreme circumstances.



Grey snow mold on turf grass and close-up of mycelium

Pink snow mold symptoms and close-up of mycelium