

Fungus Among Us

I was at a garden store the other day and asked the “wandering help” where the turf fungicide was located? He looked at me with a puzzled stare and finally said, “This is the desert, fungus doesn’t grow here.” The truth is that turfgrass disease can develop in any turf and is activated by an interaction among three factors: a susceptible plant, a disease-producing organism (pathogen), and an environment favorable for disease development.



This time of year in Southern Nevada when the nighttime temperatures are high, the humidity levels are more than normal and thunderstorms pop up randomly, the conditions are prime for turf fungal growth. You may have seen some of these in your lawn as 2”-4” brown circular spots (dollar spot), a ring of gray grass (fairy ring) or large brown areas (brown patch). There are many ways to combat this common turf problem but it all starts with proper identification of the type of fungus you have. This can be difficult since the pathogens are microscopic and by the time you suspect a problem because your lawn is dying, it may be too late.

If you have this problem, do some research. An excellent source is found at this link: <http://plantscience.psu.edu/research/centers/turf/extension/factsheets/managing-diseases>. You can always call in an expert who will run tests and treat the specific problem.

“You may think the grass is greener on the other side, but if you take the time to water your own grass it would be just as green.”
— Unknown

FAVORITE FLORA: ALOE VERA - TRUE ALOE



This month’s favorite flora is one of the most well known plants around the world for its use in everything from cosmetics to traditional medicine. *Aloe vera* or True Aloe can be found under a number of both synonyms and common names including *Aloe barbadensis*, *Aloe indica* ‘Royal’, Chinese Aloe and Indian Aloe. The True Aloe has been naturalized around the world and its native range is somewhat debated. It appears to have originated from areas of the Arabian Peninsula, North Africa and the Canary and Cape Verde islands. This Aloe is a hardy succulent able to withstand poor soils and drought. It is, however, not suited to freezing temperatures and can be damaged by a cold snap in Las Vegas. *Aloe vera* has green with sometimes white specs, fleshy

stems. It can grow up to 3 feet in height under ideal conditions but is usually only seen around 2 feet. The True Aloe flowers in the summer time and sending spikes up to 3 feet in length which are topped with yellow tubular flowers.

Uses for *Aloe vera* can date all the way back to the time of ancient Egyptian pharaohs where it was referred to as the plant of immortality. Its health and beauty claims can be found on numerous products today although scientific evidence of its effectiveness is widely debated. The most common use by many people is to apply the gel from cut stems directly to sunburns for soothing relief. However, a yellow juice found just under the skin of them stems can cause skin irritations to those with sensitive skin.

Aloe vera is a great plant for the Las Vegas Valley. It is easily grown in pots which can be brought indoors or otherwise protected in times of extreme cold. Its drought tolerance makes it a great addition to a rock or succulent garden.



Photo of the Month

A Day at the Wash
Las Vegas Wash, NV
Stan Southwick