

Moss Control in Lawns

Mosses, like most lawn weeds, primarily take advantage of bare areas but do not kill out existing grass as some people believe. Bare areas in lawn can be result from several causes:

- unsuitable grass varieties
- poor drainage
- drought
- soil compaction
- excessive shade
- thatch accumulation
- poor fertility
- diseases
- improper mowing

These cultural practices are common reasons for turf failure leading to moss or other weed problems. Improving these factors to encourage thick, healthy grass is the key to long term prevention.

The following steps will generally control existing moss:

- 1. Use a moss control product to kill existing moss in late winter or early spring.** Moss can be killed with products containing ferrous (iron) sulfate, ferrous ammonium sulfate and lawn fertilizers with moss control. Moss & algae killing soaps containing potassium salts of fatty acids will provide short term control. None of these elements pose serious threats to the environment; in fact iron and sulfur are essential nutrients for grasses and tend to improve their color.
- 2. Dethatch or rake out dead moss, or skip step (1) and dethatch or rake with more vigor.**
- 3. If soil is compacted, aerate to help open up the soil and allow better penetration of water and fertilizer.**
- 4. Overseed bare areas with a mixture turf type ryegrasses or ryegrass/fescue blend.** Top dress seeds with 1/4 inch of weed-free soil, planting mix, or compost. Keep moist until seedlings are established.
- 5. Maintain the lawn according to recommendations.**

NOTE: Dolomite lime will raise the soil pH, as well as supply calcium needed for a healthier lawn. It will not kill moss directly.

Killing the moss and failing to correct cultural conditions that favored moss growth will only result in its reinvasion. If it is impossible to correct the conditions, consider keeping the moss as a permanent low maintenance groundcover or plant other shade tolerant groundcovers.