



Media Release

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Ascochyta fungus attacks park grass

Those brown patches in Broomfield parks and landscaped areas around town are under the scrutiny of the city's Parks Division staff. The problem is *Ascochyta* leaf blight, a common problem park grasses in Colorado.

According to Dave Dalsoglio, deputy public works director, "Staff is following the accepted protocol to mitigate this problem."

Dalsoglio notes that *Ascochyta* can occur throughout the growing season, but is more prevalent in the spring and early summer when there are extended wet periods that are followed by extreme heat periods – exactly the weather Broomfield and Colorado experienced this year in late June and July.

The grass leaves usually start dying back from the tips, and affected turf areas rapidly turn straw-colored. Thankfully, Dalsoglio said, *Ascochyta* blight is primarily a leaf and not a root or crown disease, so it doesn't usually cause the plant to die. In most cases, turf grass recovers after a couple of weeks.

For residents who may notice this problem in their own lawns, Dalsoglio listed some best management practices to help clear up the disease. These are basically the same steps parks crews are taking:

- Maintain constant irrigation watering to areas. Do not increase irrigation times as that will add to the problem.
- Aerate and dethatch areas to allow air to get into the crown of the plant to dry out and allow water penetration into the soil.
- Maintain a balanced fertilization program - not spiking nitrogen levels, which encourage rapid growth.

Broomfield crews are aerating and slicing affected turf areas throughout the parks system. They are continuing to monitor watering to help maintain moisture levels in the soil, and expect to see visible improvement in the turf in the next seven to 10 days.

But, Dalsoglio said, with current weather patterns of afternoon rain showers followed by warm or hot days, a recurrence could take place. If that happens, "We'll just keep after it," he said.

For more information and a fact sheet from CSU Extension, visit <http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/garden/02901.html>

