

Ascochyta Leaf Blight

(*Ascochyta* spp. — fungal blight of cool-season grasses)

Ascochyta Leaf Blight is a **rapid-onset turf disease** that causes lawns to appear **straw-colored almost overnight**, especially after periods of **heat + drought stress, mowing injury, or irregular watering**. Despite its alarming appearance, Ascochyta is usually **temporary and non-lethal**.



Seasonal Disease Activity Calendar

Icons: 🌸 Spring | ☀️ Summer | 🍂 Fall | ❄️ Winter

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Active Season</u>	<u>Icons</u>
Ascochyta Leaf Blight	Fungus	Late Spring–Summer	🌸 ☀️

Symptoms (Homeowner-Friendly)

<u>Symptom</u>	<u>Description</u>
Sudden straw-colored patches	Lawn can turn beige in 24–48 hours , often mistaken for drought kill

Symptom

Description

Mostly leaf blight

Leaves bleach from the tips downward; crowns and roots remain healthy

Uniform patches

Affects large areas, mower-width strips, or “streaks”

Triggered by stress

Heat waves, dull mower blades, mowing wet grass, inconsistent irrigation

Healthy crown

Grass usually recovers within 2–3 weeks with proper care

Treatment & Management

Good news: Fungicides are rarely necessary. Ascochyta primarily requires **cultural correction**, not chemical control.

Main Management Steps

Action

Why it Works

Deep, consistent watering

Evens out moisture stress that triggers outbreaks

Sharpen mower blades

Dull blades shred leaf tips → more infection sites

Raise mowing height (3–3.5")

Reduces heat stress on grass

Avoid mowing when wet

Prevents fungus spread via mower wheels and blades

Reduce traffic during heat waves

Foot traffic can worsen damage

Action

No heavy spring nitrogen

Why it Works

Encourages lush, vulnerable leaf growth

Recovery Practices

- Increase watering for 1–2 weeks during heat spikes.
 - Mow less frequently until new green growth appears.
 - If patches persist for >3–4 weeks, **light overseeding** can help thicken turf.
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When to Worry vs. When It's Cosmetic

● When to Worry (action recommended)

- Grass does **not** green up within **2–4 weeks**
- Brown areas spread despite proper watering
- Turf pulls up easily (suggests *another disease*, like Necrotic Ring Spot)
- Crown and roots appear brown or mushy
- Streaking follows mower lines every time (mowing practices need correction)

Ascochyta can mimic more serious diseases, so evaluating the **roots and crowns** is important.

● Mostly Cosmetic (monitor only)

- Sudden beige patches after heat waves
- Streaks that align with mower patterns

- Leaf tips bleached while crowns remain green
- Discoloration following over- or under-watering cycles
- Small patches recovering after a week or two

In most cases, **Ascochyta is temporary**, and lawns recover quickly with improved mowing and watering habits.