

Fairy Ring

(Multiple Basidiomycete fungi — *Marasmius*, *Lepiota*, *Agaricus*, etc.)

Fairy Ring is a **soil-based fungal complex** that causes **dark green rings, dead rings, mushrooms**, or a combination of these. It is **very stubborn**, especially in Colorado's **dry, compacted soils** and **thatch-heavy bluegrass lawns**. Management requires **soil modification, deep watering**, and sometimes **fungicide + aeration programs**.



Seasonal Disease Activity Calendar

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

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Active Season</u>	<u>Icons</u>
Fairy Ring (all types)	Fungus	Spring–Fall (visible mostly Summer–Fall)	🌸 ☀️ 🍂

Symptoms (Homeowner-Friendly)

Fairy Ring occurs in **three primary forms**:

Type 1 – Dead Rings (Most Serious)

- Brown, **dead or dying rings** of grass
- Soil becomes **hydrophobic** (repels water)
- Turf within ring may not respond to irrigation

Type 2 – Dark Green Rings

- **Lush, bright-green rings** from extra nitrogen released by fungus
- Often 2–15 feet wide
- Can persist for years if untreated

Type 3 – Mushroom Rings

- Mushrooms or puffballs forming arcs or full circles
- Usually more cosmetic than harmful
- Common after rain or heavy irrigation

Primary Causes (Colorado-Specific)

- Heavy thatch (>½ inch)
- Compacted clay soils
- Bentgrass contamination
- Buried wood, roots, or construction debris
- Inconsistent irrigation / drought stress
- Organic material decaying under the lawn

Treatment & Management

Fairy Ring is **difficult**—management focuses on **soil correction**, not just fungicides.

1. Deep Soil Penetration (Critical)

<u>Action</u>	<u>Why it Works</u>
Core aerate 2–3 times per season	Breaks up hydrophobic soil & fungal mats
Water deeply through aeration holes	Helps water reach roots through repellent soil
Use a wetting agent (surfactant)	Reduces soil water repellency

2. Improve Turf Resilience

<u>Practice</u>	<u>Benefit</u>
Topdress with compost	Increases microbial competition with Fairy Ring fungi
Overseed with tall fescue or KBG	Helps mask thinning areas
Balanced fertilization	Reduces visible contrast between ring & surrounding turf

3. Fungicide Options (Professional-Level Only)

*Fungicides alone DO NOT work unless applied with **aeration + wetting agent**.*

Best classes:

- **QoI (azoxystrobin)** — most widely used
- **SDHI fungicides** (e.g., flutolanil, fluxapyroxad)
- **Combination products** for stubborn cases

Timing: Early summer **before symptoms fully appear** → best results.

When to Worry vs. When It's Cosmetic

● When to Worry (action recommended)

- Dead, brown rings that **do not respond** to irrigation
- Hydrophobic soil where water beads up or runs off
- Rings expanding each season
- Mushrooms accompanied by thinning or dead turf
- Repeated return every year despite normal care

This usually requires a **multi-year aeration + wetting agent program**, and possibly fungicides.

● Mostly Cosmetic (monitor only)

- Mushrooms after rain with **no dead turf**
- Slightly darker or greener rings
- Rings that don't expand or affect mowing
- Turf that recovers once weather cools

These forms of Fairy Ring are not harmful long-term.