

Powdery Mildew (Turfgrass)

(Primarily *Blumeria graminis* and related fungi)

Powdery Mildew is a **cosmetic fungal disease** that affects **Kentucky bluegrass** in shady, damp, low-airflow areas. It appears as a **white, powdery coating** on grass blades. It rarely kills turf and is usually a sign of **too much shade, poor airflow, or prolonged moisture**, rather than a serious infection.



Seasonal Disease Activity Calendar

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

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Active Season</u>	<u>Icons</u>
Powdery Mildew (turf)	Fungus	Spring–Fall (especially cool, cloudy, humid periods)	🌸 ☀️ 🍂

Symptoms (Homeowner-Friendly)

Symptom

Description

White, powdery film on leaf blades

Most obvious early morning or in shade

Grass turns light green, then yellow

Severe infections cause mild thinning

Occurs almost exclusively in shade

Along fences, under trees, north-facing areas

Turf feels weak or thin

Growth slows due to reduced photosynthesis

Rare to cause death

Grass normally recovers with environmental correction

Primary Causes (Colorado Conditions)

- Dense shade (trees, buildings, fences)
- Poor airflow or enclosed microclimates
- Overwatering or watering at night
- High humidity after rain or irrigation
- Kentucky bluegrass planted where sun-loving turf struggles

Treatment & Management

1. Environmental Corrections (Most Effective)

Action

Why it Helps

Increase sunlight (prune trees, raise canopy)

Sun exposure stops mildew development

Improve airflow

Reduces humidity around turf

Water early in the morning

Allows grass to dry quickly

Reduce irrigation in shaded zones

Shade requires far less water

2. Turf Cultural Practices

Practice

Benefit

Raise mowing height to 3–3.5"

Encourages stronger growth

Reduce nitrogen during cool, cloudy weather

Lush growth is more mildew-prone

Overseed with shade-tolerant grasses

Fine fescue mixes thrive in shade

3. Fungicide Options (Rarely Needed)

Powdery Mildew seldom requires chemical control in home lawns.

If treatment is desired:

Fungicide Class

Notes

DMI fungicides (myclobutanil, propiconazole)

Effective; applied preventively in shade-prone areas

QoI fungicides (azoxystrobin)

Works but rarely needed

Chlorothalonil

Contact option; short residual

Fungicides will not help if the underlying **shade and airflow issues** remain unchanged.

When to Worry vs. When It's Cosmetic

● When to Worry (action recommended)

- Turf consistently thins out in shady areas every year
- Large sections turn yellow or bare due to prolonged infection
- Powdery coating persists for **months**, not weeks
- Lawn cannot dry out due to dense shade or overwatering
- Kentucky bluegrass is failing in deep shade (species mismatch)

In these cases, consider **tree pruning, irrigation adjustment, or overseeding with fine fescue.**

● Mostly Cosmetic (monitor only)

- Light powdery residue that fades in sunnier weather
- Small patches under trees or along fences
- Turf recovers once airflow improves
- Symptoms appear only during cloudy/humid weeks
- Minimal thinning with no expanding patches

In most Colorado lawns, **Powdery Mildew is temporary and harmless**, disappearing with improved conditions.