

Turf Rust

(*Puccinia spp. / Uromyces spp.*)

Rust is a **very common late-summer lawn disease** in Colorado, especially during **dry periods, slow growth, or nutrient deficiency**. It coats grass blades in **orange dust**, weakens the lawn, and can stain shoes and pets. Rust is usually **non-lethal** and easy to manage with proper fertilization and watering.



Seasonal Disease Activity Calendar

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

Problem	Type	Active Season	Icons
Turf Rust	Fungus	Late Summer–Fall (peak)	☀️ 🍂

Symptoms (Homeowner-Friendly)

Symptom

Description

Grass blades coated with orange/yellow powder

Rust spores rub off on hands, shoes, pets

Thin, weak, slow-growing turf

Often during hot, dry, or low-nitrogen periods

Small yellow spots on leaves

Spots elongate and rupture into spore pustules

Staining

Shoes and mower wheels turn orange

Worse in shade or low air flow

Turf stays damp longer, increasing infection

Treatment & Management

Primary Management (Most Effective)

Rust is **best controlled by improving turf vigor**, not chemicals.

Action

Why it Works

Apply nitrogen fertilizer

Rust thrives when turf growth is slow

Action

Why it Works

Water deeply & consistently

Helps turf outgrow disease

Mow regularly (3–3.5")

Removes infected leaf tissue

Reduce shade if possible

Improves leaf drying

Overseed thin areas

Encourages healthy competition

Most rust outbreaks disappear within **1–3 weeks** after nitrogen and watering adjustments.

Fungicide Use (Usually Optional)

Rust is rarely severe enough to require fungicides, but they help in high-pressure or irrigated commercial settings.

Fungicide Classes

Notes

DMI fungicides (propiconazole, myclobutanil)

Effective; rotate to prevent resistance

QoI fungicides (azoxystrobin)

Good broad-spectrum option

SDHI fungicides

Used mostly in professional programs

Combo products

Useful for repeated yearly outbreaks

When to Worry vs. When It's Cosmetic

● When to Worry (action recommended)

- Lawn stays rust-covered for **3+ weeks**
- Turf becomes thin or weak despite watering
- Rust returns annually in the same shaded areas
- Shoes turn bright orange when walking across lawn
- Areas refuse to recover even with nitrogen

These cases may need **aeration, overseeding, and shade management.**

● Mostly Cosmetic (monitor only)

- Light orange dust on blades
- Rust appearing during hot, dry spells
- Turf greens up quickly after feeding
- Isolated patches that don't spread
- Mild rust that stops once weather cools

Rust is one of the **easiest lawn diseases to fix** once turf nutrition and watering improve.