

Mushrooms in Turf

“Mushroom Root Rot” is a strain of fungi typically associated with forest communities and/or declining hardwood stands. A crop of mushrooms in a lawn usually means that something is decaying under the lawn’s surface. An old stump or scrap of wood from construction, for example, can be the source of decaying material for many years to come. If wood chips are incorporated into your top dressing material, you will have mushrooms for a while. While potentially present in the Kings Point community and identified by the unique fruiting bodies, these are not the mushrooms observed in the landscape during the July site inspection. There is no way to eliminate mushrooms from turf. However, they do not damage the grass, and they are easily removed by handpicking them or mowing them over. They often pop up after a spell of damp weather, but wither as soon as the soil dries them out. During the spring or summer a circle or arc of stimulated grass or toadstools may appear in lawns. These are turf abnormalities called “fairy rings”. These rings of lush growth in the lawn are caused by release of nutrients, in particular nitrogen, from the activity of the fungus living on organic matter (i.e. decaying wood, decayed roots, even buried trash) in the soil. The causal organisms are mushroom- or puffball-forming fungi. Some mushrooms or puffballs are very poisonous when eaten. None of the mushrooms that grow in lawns are edible. Eventually the woody subsoil material decomposes completely and the mushrooms go away. At the end of the day, fairy rings are seasonal occurrences and will typically be removed by ValleyCrest’s mowing cycle. All of the information contained in this article has been provided by John Comelius of ValleyCrest Landscape Maintenance, Paul Woods of OLM, Inc. and Libby Hernandez of Sterling Management Services.

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