

TURF TWISTERS

SYSTEMICS FOR SMUT

Question: I keep hearing about Stripe Smut Disease. What is it? What do I look for and how is it controlled? (Michigan)

Answer: Stripe Smut (*Ustilago striiformis*) is most evident in late spring and early fall. When you notice the grass going off color to yellow or brown and not responding to nitrogen, look for greyish to blackish streaks between the veins on the leaf. The systemic material benomyl or benlate has been effective in controlling this turf pathogen.

COMPOSTING FOR FALL

Question: In our area, there is a ban on open burning. Do you have any ideas on how I can get rid of the leaves that drop in the fall? (Conn.)

Answer: Perhaps the best answer to this question is to go back to the old practice of composting. A mixture of shredded leaves, grass clippings, sand and soil plus any broken bags of fertilizer and lime will decompose readily. In several years, it will leave an excellent soil amendment material.

TOP-DRESSING FOR WINTER

Question: I have been told that a late fall application of top-dressing is helpful in slowing down the spread of snow mold. Is this true? (Mass.)

Answer: Yes, the application of 1 to 1½ yards of top-dressing per 5000 square feet of green late in the season, after the grass growth ceases, is helpful in reducing the spread of snow mold. The addition of a snow mold preventative fungicide to the top-dressing soil is an excellent combination to provide longer-lasting protection through the winter. It also serves the role of insulating the turf against desiccation. This is especially important on high, wind-swept greens.