



## Red Thread



**Description:** Red Thread (*Laetisaria fuciformis*) and Pink Patch (*Limonomyces roseipellis*) Red thread and pink patch are caused by two different fungi, but they often appear together and under the same environmental conditions. Lawns infected by these fungi may have a pink-to-reddish cast when viewed from a distance. If moist grass is viewed more closely, pinkish gelatinous growth of the fungi and tiny cotton-candy tufts of spores may be seen. In drier conditions, tiny red threads of the red thread fungus may be observed extending from the leaf tips. The grass itself may show irregular patches of dead and dying leaves, giving the lawn a ragged appearance. These diseases can be found on many turfgrass species but are seen most often on perennial ryegrasses and fine leaf fescues. The diseases are restricted to the leaves and are not usually very destructive. Both fungi occur mostly in the spring and fall in cool (65-70 degree F), moist weather.

**Disease Cycle:** The gelatinous masses of both fungi serve as survival structures in the thatch when dry. The fungi can also survive as mycelium in infected leaves and thatch. Some spores or pieces of fungus may be airborne, but the fungi are commonly spread by water, feet and mowing. Infections are most common on slow-growing grass stressed by compaction, drought, low temperatures or inadequate fertility.

**Control Measures:** Although we have no control over periods of prolonged cool, moist weather, it is possible to prevent or reduce red thread and pink patch through good lawn care practices. Soil pH should be maintained at 6.5-7.0 or as appropriate for the turf species. Watering should be infrequent and deep. Avoid frequent sprinklings late in the day that extend the time that the grass blades stay wet. Prune trees and shrubs to increase light penetration and air circulation. Soil fertility must be balanced. These diseases are most common in nitrogen-deficient turf, but be cautious about applying excess nitrogen fertilizer, especially in spring. Other more serious diseases, such as leafspots and melting out, can be enhanced by excess nitrogen. If red thread or pink patch diseases are found in slow growing grass, it may be helpful to temporarily collect clippings during mowing to reduce the amount of fungus returned to the lawn. Aeration of compacted soil will improve turf growth and reduce these diseases.

**Chemical Management:** Fungicides are recommended for red thread or pink patch on lawns in most cases.

Information obtained through Virginia State University

