

Lady Bug Natural Brand

Take All Root Rot (TARR) on Turfgrass

Take All Root Rot (TARR) has emerged recently as a significant, often fatal, disease of turfgrass in Texas. St. Augustine grass is especially susceptible, but Zoysia has had TARR, too. It is a soil-borne fungus whose symptoms appear mostly in the summer, but the disease actually spreads throughout the lawn in the cooler months of fall and spring. The symptoms show up first as yellow uneven patches in an otherwise green lawn. The ultimate result can be that the lawn dies in patches one to ten feet in diameter. The roots will be shortened, discolored, and eventually blackened and shriveled.

Take All Root Rot can be associated with excessive nitrogen fertilizer, especially urea-based, synthetic fertilizers, and the use of broadleaf herbicides. Please consult our *Lady Bug Natural Brand Organic Lawn Care Guide* for more information on fertilizing and weed control with natural products.

Remember that St. Augustine is a poorly adapted plant in our area, and is susceptible to a long list of diseases and pests. Lawn in general is a high maintenance part of the landscape, requiring mowing, watering, fertilizing, weed, disease, and pest control, taking an excess of time, money, energy, and resources. Consider minimizing the lawn and planting native or well-adapted trees, shrubs, xeric plants, or ground cover instead. In addition, consider planting vegetable gardens and fruit trees, where the water is at least going to edible plants.

While there has not been an extensive amount of research on TARR, nor a long history of curing the disease, the following options for treatment of TARR are gleaned from existing research and basic organic disease control guidelines. Of course, spray liquids only in early morning or late evening. Choose at least the first two steps for best results.

1. Apply **peat moss** to the entire lawn at the rate of one 3.8 cubic foot bale per 1000 square feet, and water in. Peat moss has a very low pH. Take-All prefers alkaline soil, so lowering the soil pH to be more acidic can suppress the fungus. Texas A&M University studies have shown this treatment to be effective.
2. Spray the entire lawn with **Actinovate**. For best results, spray once every 6 – 8 weeks. Apply initially at the stronger rate as indicated on the label. This is a beneficial bacteria that colonizes the roots and actively suppresses and controls such soil-borne diseases as Take-All and Brown Patch.
3. Spray the entire lawn with aerobically-brewed **compost tea**. This is a product that is becoming more and more available from nurseries, or it may be brewed at home using *Lady Bug Brand Revitalizer Compost*. Usually, compost tea should be used within eight hours of purchase from a nursery. For disease control, spray compost tea undiluted once a week for the first month, then once a month thereafter. See www.soilfoodweb.com for more information on compost tea and soil biology.
4. As a regular maintenance practice, topdress the entire lawn with compost, only when temperatures are below 90 degrees. Apply *Lady Bug Brand Revitalizer Compost* ½” or less across the lawn. Good quality manure compost contains beneficial living microorganisms that are very helpful in disease suppression. It can be added to dead patches anytime.

Remember, any liquids should only be sprayed first thing in the morning or late in the evening.

Best results are obtained when the lawn is treated at the first sign of Take All Root Rot, and treatments are continued as directed. Please let us know if you have any further questions or feedback.

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