

## Features

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# The Unwanted Greening of Spring

*John Johnston*

For many homeowners, spring's first looks start with venturing out onto the lawn, finally uncovered by the last patches of snow following a long, cold winter. Surveying the ground and seeing green is a welcomed sight. Or is it?

## Identifying and Understanding Moss Conditions

Moss is a common occurrence for many areas, including lawns, sidewalks, fence lines, rooftops, siding, mulched beds and even bare ground. It grows to form a thick green mat that spreads and establishes itself by producing spores, which are spread by the wind.

Moss thrives in a broad range of conditions: The sun may or may not be relevant to where it can grow! Once a homeowner inspects their surroundings, they'll likely see moss on the surfaces of many areas around the landscape and home. Consider all of the conditions that favor moss in lawn areas, including acidic soil, moist or wet soils, heavily shaded areas, poor drainage and even low soil fertility. Anywhere grass is difficult to grow and maintain is a potential area for moss to become established.

## pH Matters

Beautiful lawns are the result of common sense, good timing and known science. Consumers may think it begins and ends with dumping fertilizer on the lawn a few times a year. Truth be told, it takes a bit more to make a lawn the envy of the neighborhood. Soil pH is key in determining whether the fertilizer in question is being broken down and working with the type of grass in a homeowner's yard.

Most turf grasses like a pH in the 6.0 to 6.5 range, unless you live in the South and have centipede grass types, which like a slightly lower pH of 5.5. Correcting low pH in a lawn is done using lime in various types of particle sizes: pulverized, granular and pelletized. Another recommended product is from Jonathan Green, known as MAG-I-CAL, which uses a highly soluble form of calcium that helps raise pH quickly.

## Solution Selling for Quick Results

Consumers are short on patience and want instant results. Moss controls are available in both granular and liquid applications from Bonide featuring their best seller, Moss Max Liquid Ready-to-Spray. This product won't stain walkways or damage desirable plant material. It's safe to use on decks, patios, driveways, roofs, trees and lawns. It works within hours to kill moss, and even lichens, safely.

## Damage Control

Both Bonide and Jonathan Green offer moss-control granules in their lawn care lineup. These are easily applied using a lawn spreader and contain no fertilizers to force excess growth in the lawn.

Typically, lawns containing moss have another common issue: soil compaction. Without deep penetrating root systems of turf grasses, moss can readily establish on top of surfaces and not need much moisture to remain a nuisance all season long. Core aeration is recommended during the fall to break apart soil compaction and allow moisture and nutrients to break the tension in the soil surface. Using a grass seed mixture that contains Kentucky blue grass varieties helps drive additional roots that can fill in bare spots in the lawn.

If you're treating an area that remains wet and moist with dense shade conditions, one product does an excellent job in growing grass where others fail. Jonathan Green Shady Nooks grass seed contains a seed variety that excels in establishing itself in poor, moist, shady conditions. The type of seed is *Poa trivialis*, which is easy to grow and maintain. If you don't have a mixture that contains this varietal type, consider giving it a try with your customers. Another seed in the mixture is hard fescue, which grows well in dry, shaded areas.

With just a few great products, you can help your customers conquer even the toughest problems with moss control. Are your store shelves stocked with solution-based products? It's not too late to get going; you and your customers will be happy you did. **GP**

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