

RUST (*Puccinia* spp.)

GENERAL

The turf grass disease known as rust has separate, unique and complex life cycles. The spores of this disease (fungi) infect the leaves and develop additional fungus reproductive structures.

The disease is first observed as tiny, yellow spots or lesions on the surface of the grass blade. As these lesions enlarge, they become slightly elongated and eventually rupture to reveal tiny clusters of rusty-orange spores. The rusty spores are crushed like powder between the fingers and leave orange discoloration on all they touch. The complexity of the rust cycle helps to assure the survival of the fungus.

CAUSES

There are a number of rust fungi that are capable of attacking many turf grasses.

The most common rust fungi is stem rust and it invades Kentucky bluegrass.

Rust seldom becomes a problem until the grass stops vigorous summer growth, generally after an extended dry period.

Rust can be worse in newly seeded areas, and if neglected can result in loss of good turf.

WHAT TO DO

In most instances, the presence of rust is considered only a minor annoyance. Even though the grass blades become flecked with orange and are slightly discolored, there is little concern.

Rust disease generally disappears with change in the weather and/or fertilization.

In addition, it would be good practice to remove grass clippings while the disease is present.

Depending on how severe the disease is, it may take several weeks to recover.

As always, if you do have any questions please call our office.