

# Snow Mold

The winter is officially over and spring is among us. To most, the changing of the seasons signifies the start of more sunshine, the showing of beautiful spring flowers, and the greening of the grass. Finally able to venture outside without six layers of winter coats, we all walk our yards planning for the coming summer. We circle our properties assessing our planting beds, slowly coming out of winter hibernation, when suddenly a very noticeable grouping of matted down brown spots in our lawn appears seemingly out of nowhere!

They weren't there in the fall, and there's no dog living in your home...it must be a neighbor's dog, right? It isn't just your lawn either; the next 3 houses also have the same problem, and a few blocks over the entire block shows the same problems! Before you go rallying your neighbors to confront your local dog walker to pony up for the damages, there's a very good chance the brown spots are actually snow mold, and the fault of none other than Mother Nature herself.

All common grasses are susceptible to snow mold given a perfect storm of mild temperatures, excessive moisture, and extended snow cover such as what we experienced this winter. Snow mold becomes active when temperatures are just above freezing, the ground is moist, and there is a natural cover on the lawn to help retain the moisture – snow,

leaves, or downed trees. The symptoms are fairly easy to spot: circular patches (sometimes growing together to form odd shapes) of straw colored, matted down grass blades.

So what to do if you have been affected by snow mold? Call in the troops, replace your lawn, increase your fertilizer applications, and water as much as possible? The truth is that snow mold is almost never a serious disease, and very rarely occurs yearly in home lawns. The damage caused by snow mold should fix itself, although those areas may have a slower green up than non affected areas. If you find that the circles are not greening up, and the turf is truly dead, simply rake out the dead grass, till the soil, drop a handful of grass seed, and continue to till until the seed is approximately 1/2 inch below the surface. Just make sure the seed is 60-70% Kentucky Bluegrass, keep the ground moist where the seed was planted, and by May you won't even notice those spots were even there!



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## William Quinn & Sons Newsletter

### Spring 2010

## LANDSCAPING VS. WEATHER

Plants have a bad habit of not keeping up with the "times". Twenty years ago no one would have ever dreamed we'd be keeping all of our important phone numbers, calendar dates, maps, and even favorite games in a device that fits in our pockets and can be carried around virtually anywhere we go. Forgot what day it was? Just reach into your pocket and check your cell phone! Not sure when spring begins? Countless websites are dedicated to information about our seasons. Cell phones and the internet are common luxuries we take for granted now-a-days, but unfortunately our trees, shrubs, and other plants never caught on. They simply rely on good old fashion Mother Nature to tell them the time, season, wind direction, or weather forecast.

Why do the leaves change color? It's not because the weather cools down, but rather the days become shorter and the leaves cannot photosynthesize and produce chlorophyll (the green color we see in the leaves). How does a tree or flower know when it is spring and time to release its buds for the year? The ground's temperature acts as a natural calendar to tell the trees what time of the year it is.

The weather we've seen over the past few years has been anything but typical. Two very cool, wet summers followed by two record breaking winters. And remember last fall when the trees clung onto their leaves so long they almost didn't drop before the first snow of the season? What do the plants do when Mother Nature pulls tricks like she has the past few years? Same as what they've always done – take cues on weather conditions and proceed as normal.

Unexpected frost or sudden cold changes in the weather can have drastic consequences on plants that are not fully dormant, or were tricked into coming out of dormancy too early. Twigs, flowers, or even whole branches can be lost. The problem is that they simply don't know any better. Damage may not be visible until later in the season – sometimes showing as cankers or increasing the likelihood of insect infestations.

Our weather patterns can be anything but predictable. Even the best weathermen cannot seem to calculate proper forecasts lately. Trees and shrubs may suffer from varying conditions uncommon to our area but they will repair themselves if properly cared for. Any downed branches or limbs should be removed as soon as possible. Any sign of stress or leaf scorch should be addressed with additional watering. Any unknown problems should be reported to your management company immediately for further inspection by our knowledgeable staff. Only the plants with the heaviest damage typically do not survive the stresses of a Chicago summer.



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# Cathy's Corner

Happy spring to all returning and new customers! I hope everyone had a healthy, safe winter. We are glad to see another winter season behind us. Spring is proving to be another interesting start to our unpredictable weather. I hope everyone doesn't become too accustomed to the 70 and 80 degree days because it's likely to change. I just hope we're not wearing warm jackets in July. Because the temperatures have been mild for this time of year, many trees and perennials are already budding out and getting ready to flower. This doesn't mean it is okay to start planting tender annuals. Remember, mother's day is a good guideline for planting flowers.

Now is a good time to schedule your spring walk-thru because the weather is cooperating. Please feel free to contact me and set a day for your property evaluation.

As some of you may be aware, last season we started a point system for all foremen. They earned points each week for a variety of achievements. The competition was a great success! Again, this year, we are asking you to let us know when your foreman has performed an outstanding job. So many times we only hear the negatives, and this is a great way to let the foreman know their hard work really does pay off.

Lastly, I would like to thank all of you for the many mass cards and sympathy cards we received following my mother's passing in December. The outpouring of support was overwhelming, and we realized just how blessed we are to have so very many wonderful friends who also happen to be customers. Many of you knew my mom as the office boss for more than 30 years. As we have suffered a great loss, her memory will forever be in our hearts.

Thank you for the confidence you have with our company. The Quinn family appreciates your business and looks forward to another maintenance season.



Meryl Quinn  
1930 - 2009  
Wife - Mother - Grandmother

Cathy

## The Spray Front

The Voles! The Voles! If you've never heard of a vole before, don't worry - you're not alone. These outdoor mice can cause a lot of trouble during winter months when extended snow cover is present on lawns. This year has been no exception with significant vole damage being reported on properties that border empty grassy fields, golf courses, or are near new construction. I am seeing voles in areas that I have never seen them before, and they are well prepared for battle.

What does vole damage look like? The easiest way to explain the damage a family of voles can produce is that it resembles small trenches similar to lightning strikes or a miniature city subway system, with brown grass surrounding the trenches. Voles tend to lead these trails from their nest outward. They are en route to a bed area or tree where they can then feed all winter long on a plant's root system. Several methods of vole deterrents and poisonous bait are available to remedy the problem. If left unstopped, voles will take over an entire lawn. Liquid Fence manufactures a

sprayable Mole and Vole repellent that is sold in most home improvement centers, but the most effective way to quickly treat a vole problem is with bait. After all when the repellent is no longer active the voles simply return to their prior stomping ground hungry for more!

I have been baiting voles for some of our customers for several years now, and have become very familiar with their habits. If you are considering using poisonous bait to kill off the voles, please first consider the possibility that a pet might also find the bait and become an unintended target of your vole control. The most effective baits are regulated, and only able to be applied by a properly licensed applicator. Over the past few years of testing, I have identified the most effective bait - as well as safest baiting techniques - to control the voles. Please do not hesitate to contact me at our office if you believe you have a vole "hideout" in your lawn or property.

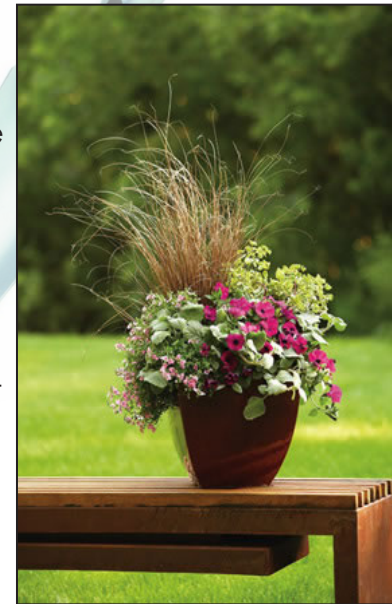
# Container Garden Planting

Before you buy plants for your patio containers there are a few things you should consider. Three basic factors come into play when choosing a container: eye appeal, convenience, and cost. For vibrant plant growth, the container must provide adequate space for roots and soil to thrive. The choice of the container material affects both the look of the garden and its required maintenance.

Ceramic pots look great but usually have no drainage. The least expensive planters are terra cotta and clay. They are made of porous material and will soak up lots of water. Wire baskets lined with absorbent materials soak up water as do peat pots. If you choose containers made up of porous material, it's a good idea to line it with plastic to avoid rapid water loss.

Metal containers look great on store shelves, but because temperatures fluctuate, this type of planter may need more attention. Take into account that dark colored containers absorb more heat than light colored ones. Fluctuating temperatures are also a problem with small pots. These create bigger problems in the sun than in the shade. Dark colored containers exposed to the intense summer sun can get very hot. The heat transfers to the soil. If it gets too warm, roots are damaged and the potting material will dry out very quickly.

Too much moisture will cause the roots to rot over time. Always make sure the pot's drainage is sufficient when using solid metal or plastic containers. When weather permits, have fun and shop around for your container plants. Just make sure that they are adept to the conditions you plan to keep them in - i.e. full sun, part shade, full shade. We recommend Proven Winners when choosing container plants. These plants come with established root systems and outperform other brands year after year.



## Landscaping to Save Energy

A recent study by Mississippi State University found that a well maintained lawn can have the same cooling effect on a home as an 8 1/2 ton air conditioning unit. The turf releases moisture to cool itself off, cooling the surrounding areas as well. On a warm, sunny day when the sidewalk could hit upwards of 100 degrees, the surrounding turf areas will usually stay at a comfortable 75 degrees. How's that for energy savings?

Well placed trees will also aid in the reduction of energy costs. The US Department of Energy's computer models show that trees placed in areas that shade a home during the summer months, and block wind during winter months, can reduce and save an average of \$100 to \$250 annually. Add in increased curb appeal, and property

values, and the trees pay for themselves in a few short years. Did I mention that trees help reduce noise and air pollution too?

For an even greater savings consider combining trees with shrubs and ornamentals planted around your home's foundation. This barrier creates a sort of "dead air space" between the plants and your home, minimizing internal heat or cool air loss. It's estimated that combining trees with shrubs can save a homeowner up to 30% on energy costs - depending on how well insulated the home already is.

Landscaping truly is an investment in the future of your home or property. Not only will your home look great, but you'll be saving money!

