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## Ascochyta, a fungal disease common on Kentucky bluegrass lawns in Colorado.

Don't like the weather, wait 15 minutes and it will change. This is a familiar saying to those of us that live in Colorado. But frequent weather changes are unkind to our landscape. A three day May heat spell caused many lawns to turn brown. Why?

In mid-May we experienced a short stretch of unseasonably hot weather followed by cool and wet weather. Denver's temps on May 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> were 88, 90 and 84 respectively. The following Memorial Day weekend a cold front arrived bringing with it frequent rains. This was the perfect weather set up for a fungal disease called Ascochyta (as-co-kite-ah) leaf spot.

Many irrigation systems were not set up to deliver enough water to lawns during this brief heat spell. The turf became water stressed and turned a gray color. Then, the weather quickly changed to cool and humid. Nearly overnight, the affected grass plants bleached out and turned a straw color. The grass patches appear dead, however only the grass blades are affected – the roots are unharmed.

Ascochyta appears in the spring and summer months. The spring infections recover quickly in the cooler weather. Summer infections are slow to recover and may only do so with cooler fall temperatures.

### What should you do?

1. If not already completed, have your lawn aerated.
2. Set your mower to a height of 2 ½ to 3 inches. Take time now to make sure your mower blade is sharp.
3. Continue with a balanced fertility program. Do not increase fertilization to promote recovery.
4. Check your irrigation system to ensure complete coverage. Water the affected area with more water and less often. Limit your watering to the early morning hours so the grass plant will dry quickly.
5. Applying a soil conditioner that promotes water penetration may also promote recovery.

To help prevent a similar occurrence later in the summer, sharpen your mower blade monthly and check your sprinkler coverage frequently. Increase and decrease your irrigation schedule as the summer temperatures change.