

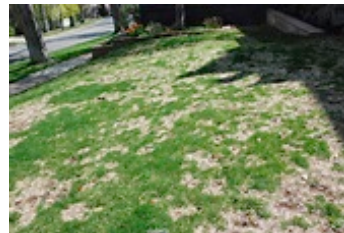
## An Unwanted Gift of This Winter's Snowfall

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This winter left behind a horticultural reminder of what snow can do to our lawns. If your lawn looks like mine, scattered patches of straw-colored dried grass, you have snow mold. And while I had always known of snow mold, I had never had the unpleasant evidence on my turf. Because the heavy snow falls came before the ground was solidly frozen, and because the snow covering lingered for a period of time, the appropriate environment was created for snow mold to thrive.

Snow mold is a type of fungus and a turf disease, usually affecting cool season grasses, that damages or kills grass after snow melts, typically in late winter or early spring. Its damage is usually concentrated in circles three to twelve inches in diameter, although yards may have many of these circles, sometimes to the point at which it becomes hard to differentiate between different circles. Snow mold comes in two varieties: pink or gray (white). The gray or white variety damages only the blades, whereas the pink is more damaging because it can affect both the roots and the crown.

Snow mold most often occurs when there is a heavy, deep snowfall before the ground has completely frozen. All that weight on fragile grass plants, coupled with lots of wintertime moisture, not to mention cover from leaves, long grass, and lawn debris, all provide the perfect environment for snow mold. The fungus that causes the mold remains inactive in the soil in the form of spores. It is always a good practice to cut the lawn quite short for the last mowing before winter. Leaves should also be removed. Cleared snow should not be piled high on the lawn. (Good luck with that!)



If you have snow mold, once the snow has disappeared, gently clean the areas infected by removing the dead grass. Improve drainage. Gently rake the infected areas until you remove the mycelium. Remove any thatch. Keep mowing your lawn. Only use light fertilizer to encourage healthy turf growth. Unfortunately the fungi will remain dormant in the soil as resistant spores, easily surviving until the next ideal opportunity. A fungicide can be applied to the lawn in late fall. Use only slow release nitrogen fertilizers.