

## Fairy Rings in Lawns

Large brown rings pop up on your lawn. What are they? These mysterious rings are called Fairy Rings! They are caused by a fungal disease that eats decaying plant tissues. In medieval lore, they were thought to appear after fairies danced around in the area, hence the common name Fairy Ring.



### What do Fairy Rings look like?

Fairy Rings are circular, abnormal turfgrass growth. They usually appear in turf with high levels of organic matter and in areas where trees have recently been removed. The rings can be up to 15 feet in diameter. The texture and color of the turf are distinctly different from the surrounding area both inside and outside the ring. The turf can be brown and drier or much greener and denser than the surrounding turf. Sometimes, mushrooms may form on the edge of the ring, particularly in wet conditions.

### Where do they come from?

Fairy Ring disease is caused by fungi that feed on decaying organic matter such as tree stumps, logs, leaves, or roots. The fungi growth begins from the center and expands outward.

There are three types of rings based on the conditions:

- Type 1 The fungi produce compounds that reduce the soil's water absorption, causing drought conditions. This leads to the turf browning and dying.
- Type 2 As the fungi feed on decaying organic matter, it releases nitrogen causing lush growth and a dense green ring of turf.
- Type 3 Rings of mushrooms grow around the edges of the ring during wet weather, particularly in the fall.

### What should I do about the rings?

Fortunately, Fairy Rings do not cause the turf to die. They are mostly cosmetic issues. Typically, the rings will disappear naturally. There are a few prevention steps you can take:

- Aerate your turf to reduce the amount of thatch that the fungi feed on.
- Remove tree stumps, fallen limbs, and leaves from the lawn to reduce the amount of organic matter the fungi feed on.
- Top dress your lawn with a fine layer of sand to "dilute" the amount of organic matter in the lawn.

To reduce the distinctly different appearance of the ring, if it's brown, use a soaker hose on the ring to soak the area, so water reaches the roots. If the ring is greener than the surrounding lawn, fertilize the surrounding turf with a high-nitrogen fertilizer to even up the color. Fungicides are not effective in the treatment or prevention of Fairy Rings so don't waste your money or time on those.

The bottom line is to be patient and let the "fairies" that caused the rings to move on their own!

Learn more about Fairy Rings from this excellent article from the Wisconsin Horticulture Division of Extension weblink: <https://hort.extension.wisc.edu/articles/fairy-rings/>