Lethal Viral Necrosis of St. Augustinegrass

University of Florida/Palm Beach County Cooperative Extension
Service Department, 559 N. Military Trail, West Palm Beach, FL 33415

March 1, 2018

Virus Symptoms

- Splotchy, yellow stretchy spots on leaf blades
- Dead spots streaking on leaf blades
- Unhealthy yellowish tinge and/or dead turfgrass
- Often excessive weeds

How It Spreads

- Infected grass sap on mower wheels and other lawn trimming equipment
- Occasionally by aphids
- Planting infested sod or sprigs

Mower Sanitizers

- Virkon S (DuPont) 2% solution spray
- 1 part household bleach with 9 parts water solution spray. Caution: bleach rusts steel.

What Can You Do?

No pesticide (fungicides, insecticides, etc.) are effective to control the problem. The viruses cannot be transmitted through the soil or reclaimed water. Some management measures include:

- When possible, avoid mowing when the grass is wet because it may enhance pathogen spread.
- Blow plant debris off mowing equipment and tires, spray with sanitizer, and allow to dry after mowing infected lawns.
- Promote the most vigorous growth possible with best management practices for fertilization, watering, mowing height and fungal management.

Lethal Viral Necrosis in Palm Beach County

Lethal Viral Necrosis of Floratam St. Augustinegrass (formerly sugarcane mosaic virus - SCMV) was first confirmed in Palm Beach County in the early 1960’s. However, at that time, genome (genetic) testing was not available to confirm virus types.

In recent years, several hundred instances of the virus have been tracked in the St. Petersburg area, with hundreds more mostly in the southeastern counties of Florida.

It kills the Floratam variety of St. Augustinegrass within 3 years. Floratam is by far the most popular variety of St. Augustinegrass in Florida.

Symptoms are visible throughout the year, but necrotic tissue usually appears when air temperatures drop below 65°F.

All other commercially available and tested varieties of St. Augustinegrass are resistant to the necrotic symptoms, and can be used as alternatives to Floratam. The Classic variety has not been tested yet. Varieties other than Floratam tend to have greater large patch and sometimes other fungal problems.

See http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/lh010

For additional information, contact the Palm Beach County Master Gardener Hotline at 561.233.1750 or email mgardenfwd@pbcgov.org. Check out our webpage at: http://discover.pbcgov.org/coextension/horticulture/Pages/Sugarcane-Mosaic-Virus.aspx

Author: Bill Schall, Commercial Horticulture Extension Agent

Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners

March 1, 2018