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## Potential culprits behind thinning grass

Wednesday, April 24, 2019



leaf blade to shred and curl. After the blades have shred, they turn brown and die. The grass thins because stripe smut makes it vulnerable to problems like drought.

### Ascochyta leaf blight

Lawns suffering from ascochyta leaf blight will become straw-colored. According to the lawn care and pesticide experts at Ortho®, when a lawn is affected by ascochyta leaf blight, its healthy grass blades will be mixed in with diseased grass blades. Most prevalent in the spring, this disease can affect grass at any time during the growing season. That's because the ascochyta fungi invade leaf blades through wounds, such as those that can result from mowing. Ortho® notes that dull lawn mowers can contribute to the disease, which might disappear on its own and can even return after it's seemingly been cured.

Various issues can cause grass blades to thin. Working with a landscape professional is a great way to combat such issues before they compromise the look of a lawn. GT194808

Thick grass is often a hallmark of a healthy lawn. If grass begins to thin, homeowners may feel as though all the time and effort they spent tending to their lawns was for naught.

Thinning grass can be caused by any number of things. And while it might take a little effort to address, thinning grass can be treated if homeowners correctly identify that cause of the problem.

### Leaf spot

The Center for Agriculture, Food and the Environment at the University of Massachusetts Amherst notes that leaf spot diseases affect both cool-

and warm-season turfgrasses. Various fungi can cause leaf spot. Symptoms and the timing of the appearance of leaf spot will vary depending on which fungi is causing the problem. For example, bipolaris sorokiniana, which affects grasses in warm, wet summer months, produces small spots that are dark purple to black. Dreschslera poae is another fungi that causes dark purple to black spots.

However, it tends to appear in the spring when the weather is cool and moist. Understanding the different fungi and when they typically strike can help homeowners identify what is causing their grass to thin. In such situations, professional landscapers can be invaluable resources as well.

**Stripe smut**  
The University of Maryland Extension notes that stripe smut primarily poses a threat to Kentucky bluegrass that is older than three years. Pale green streaks that run parallel to the veins in the leaves and leaf sheaths are symptomatic of stripe smut, which tends to be noticed in spring and fall, when weather is cool. As the disease progresses, stripes turn black or a silvery gray, causing the

## Home updates that pay off

(StatePoint) Whether you're remodeling for a fresh take on an old style or contemplating a new build, there are choices you can make that will definitely pay off, say experts.

To add value to your project, consider these recommended tips from Stephen Quick of Stephen Alexander Homes, builder of the 2018 Coastal Virginia Magazine Idea House.

Once an afterthought, lighting takes center stage in a home's design. "Con-



Let lighting take center stage in your home's design.

sider your lighting needs at the start of the project. Wait too long and it can become expensive to move or add lights," advises Quick.

When planning lighting basics, think of the design as a whole; choose your decorative lighting fixtures at the same time you choose recessed. A large fixture throws a lot of light, so keep adjacent recessed lights to a minimum.

Dimming capabilities are a must, and Quick recommends using "smart" dimmers like Hubbell's iDevice to customize the dimming range. The control offered by these dimmers means you can use larger statement lighting pieces with many bulbs to create amazing, but not overwhelming, spaces.

Quick tends to use lighting with a classic foundation, but loves to play with the eclectic. Adding a bold piece that is "whimsical" in an unexpected area offers a surpris-

ing focal point, he says.

"We've relied on Progress Lighting for twenty years," says Quick. "Especially in the past few years, as they've taken giant leaps in design."

Stephen Alexander Homes incorporate "lifestyle focus" open floor plans as their signature look. Now, they are pioneering a new trend in home culinary spaces. Pantries are re-imagined to not only be practical, but a spot to display the homeowner's hobbies and interests. Think useful collectibles like olive oils, wine or beer. Lighting this room properly is a must, as the light needs to be functional, yet have an added element of drama to showcase the hobby.

Beyond mere dollars and cents, make style choices based on the manufacturer rather than the component. As a builder, Quick starts with a "basket" of necessary elements, but it's how they are applied that ultimately makes the design special.

Consider engaging an interior designer. Even with a smaller remodel budget, hiring an expert who knows which brands give you the most bang for your buck is worth their fee. You're more likely to end up with the look you want at a price that is worth the investment.

Paint is one of the biggest design tools at your disposal. "A new coat of paint sets the tone for everything. Choosing the perfect colors can be hard, but paint companies are on target with the latest trends within the color spectrum, adding colors that hit the mark to give your spaces a fresh look," says Quick.

And if you don't like the color once it's on the walls? "Don't be afraid to change it. Paint is not expensive. It's more expensive to keep a look you don't like."

For design ideas, visit [progresslighting.com/styles](http://progresslighting.com/styles).

When making home updates, think of those projects that will pay off the most.

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