



## CHAPTER FOUR

# Disease Management

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## Cultural practices that reduce turf diseases

Though it can be challenging to maintain intensively-managed turfgrass without fungicides, good cultural practices will reduce the need for fungicide applications and make necessary applications more effective. In fact, effective and well-timed cultural practices may minimize or eliminate the need for fungicide applications in lawns and other less intensely maintained turfgrass areas.

### Starting right

Prepare the site well. Remove stumps, construction materials and other debris. Improve drainage where necessary, and fill in low areas. Test soil pH and adjust to 6.0 to 7.0 if required. Break up soil clumps to provide a uniform area for seed or sod.

Choose seed or sod carefully (see Chapter 3, Turfgrass Species and Cultivars). Inspect sod for diseases or other problems. Choose high quality, pathogen-free seed. Many disease resistant cultivars are now available and should be included in blends and mixtures. Genetic variability in turfgrasses will reduce the chance for epidemics that kill or damage large areas of turf.

General landscaping decisions can have significant impacts on turf health. Pruning of tree branches may increase light penetration to allow better turfgrass growth. Trees, shrubs, and other plantings should be placed to allow good air circulation, so turf will dry quickly after rain or dew. In very shady areas, shade-tolerant turfgrass cultivars or other groundcovers should be planted.

Seed should be planted only in well prepared soil with good drainage when temperatures stay in the range to allow rapid germination and establishment. Keep soil and seed moist, but do not over-water.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

For information about turf disease diagnostic services available from UMass, see Appendix C on page 94 of this guide.