

# Slime Molds in the Landscape

Dr. Green Thumb  
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## DIAGNOSIS

During warm, humid conditions each year, many gardeners are very surprised and sometimes even alarmed to discover strange or alien substances growing on their ornamental wood mulch, lawn grass, or even leaves of their landscape plants. Our plant disease clinic gets numerous phone calls from panicky gardeners and landscapers about these peculiar, "slimy," or "crusty" masses that seem to appear overnight. Although these creepy-looking masses are considered to be a special type of fungus, slime molds possess some animal-like characteristics, which make them interesting to observe and examine. The most common slime molds encountered in the landscape belong to the genera *Physarum spp.* and *Fuligo spp.* In the presence of moisture, spores of these organisms germinate to give rise to a plasmodium that can move very slowly across mulch or other substrates.

These diverse organisms actually eat bacteria associated with organic material and humus. They love moist, shady areas such as crevices in mulch, rotting logs, and leaf litter. These curiosities are not considered plant disease organisms, although they sometimes shade plant parts or become a nuisance in the landscape or lawn.

## SYMPTOMS

Slime molds can be found in many different shapes and colors. Slime molds in the genus *Fuligo* produce fruiting bodies on wood mulch that are yellow- or cream-colored, crusty masses that resemble dog vomit or scrambled eggs. Sometimes slime molds may climb up landscape plants, giving them an unsightly appearance. Some slime molds resemble veins or small fans on wood mulch in moist, shady areas. *Physarum* is common on lawn grasses. The fruiting body is dark gray to black and contains purple spores. These slime molds resemble soot and occur in small groups or rings in the turfgrass.

## PRESCRIPTION

Because slime molds do not cause plant diseases and are merely a nuisance, no chemical control is recommended. The best way to control these curiosities is to break them up and dry them out. Rake and dispose of the fruiting bodies on wood mulch. Slime molds can be discouraged from forming by keeping the mulch dry. In the lawn, rake or sweep the thatch. A stream of water can also be used to wash the spore masses from the lawn.

\*\*[See Extension Fact Sheet FSA7537](#)

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