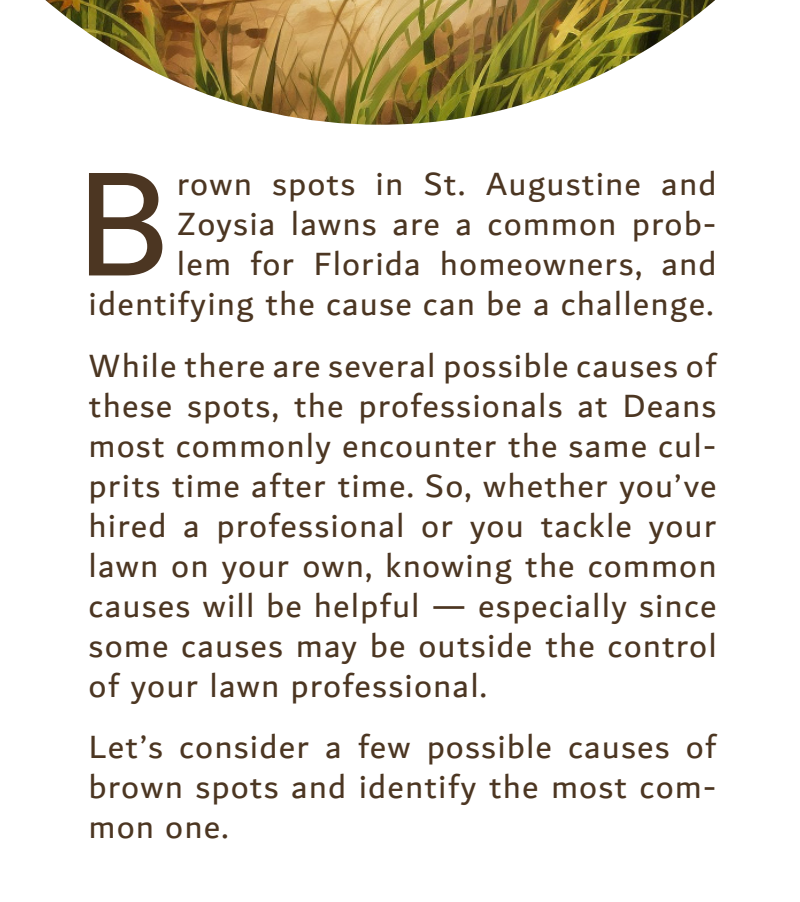


SPOT CHECK

Diagnosing Brown Patches

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Brown spots in St. Augustine and Zoysia lawns are a common problem for Florida homeowners, and identifying the cause can be a challenge.

While there are several possible causes of these spots, the professionals at Deans most commonly encounter the same culprits time after time. So, whether you’ve hired a professional or you tackle your lawn on your own, knowing the common causes will be helpful — especially since some causes may be outside the control of your lawn professional.

Let’s consider a few possible causes of brown spots and identify the most common one.

SCALPING?

Cutting your lawn too short or using a dull mower blade can injure the grass and cause brown patches to appear. Ideally, St. Augustine will be mowed at 3.75 - 4” and Zoysia at 2.75 - 3”. This prevents scalping and protects against drought stress.

Most homeowners recognize scalping and take care to avoid it. For this reason, we’ll consider this unlikely to be the cause of persistent brown spots.

SOIL CONCERN?

Compact soil restricts water penetration, leading to weakened grass in some areas. While brown spots can be caused by compact soil, this is usually readily identified as the obvious cause. Simply reduce the foot traffic and gently till the soil. In severe cases, a thin layer of top soil can be applied to aid in further growth.

Hydrophobic soil results from a build-up of waxy organic material that causes soil to repel water. This results in drought-like conditions in affected areas. Supplementing your lawn with organic fertilizer can help diminish those unwanted brown patches, but hydrophobic soil is quite rare, so these next possible culprits are far more likely.

FUNGUS? (LOOK FOR A DISTINCT RING-LIKE PATTERN.)

Fungal issues are less common in summer, as most fungi thrive in cooler conditions. If you observe brown spots during the summer, it’s likely not due to a fungal infection.

Fungal infections tend to create circular patterns with clear edges and leave spots or lesions on the grass blades. If you pull on a blade and it easily comes loose from the ground, emitting a musty or rotten scent, fungus may be the culprit.

Still, this candidate is far from the most common cause.

LAWN PESTS?

Chinch bugs, mole crickets, and grubs are often associated with brown spots because they feed on the leaf blades and roots, and, in sufficient numbers, can cause brown spots.

However, if you’re using a professional program, pest control products are applied regularly, so their numbers are kept too low to inflict serious damage.

If you don’t have a professional service, you can test by applying 3/4” inches water to the area in question for at least 2 weeks. If you see no sign of improvement, pests could be at play.

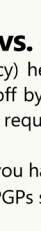
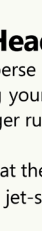
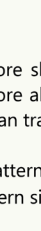
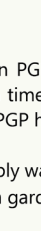
Assuming a professional lawn care program is in place, we’ll move on to the most common cause of brown spots in St. Augustine and Zoysia turf.

IRRIGATION!

Irrigation issues are *by far* the most common cause of brown patches in lawns. Most times, there is uneven coverage due to misaligned sprinkler heads which is why homeowners are confused as to why the areas fail to become green after several waterings. Other times, the system run time is too brief to deliver enough water at all.

This common cause of brown spots may not be a surprise since we at Deans often encourage good watering practices.

Of course, this is because we understand that sufficient watering is the absolute most important part of maintaining a healthy lawn. Without it, even the professional products applied are limited in their effect.

	 Amount	 Times weekly	 MP Time*	 PGP Time*
86°+	3/4”	3	105 mins	45 mins
76-85°	1/2”	2	70 mins	30 mins
46-75°	1/2”	1	70 mins	30 mins
< 46°	Do not water			

*MP Heads vs. PGP Heads

*MP (high-efficiency) heads disperse water more slowly than PGP heads. This reduces water runoff by allowing your lawn more absorption time. While more efficient, MP heads require a longer run time than traditional PGP heads.

To tell which type you have, look at the spray pattern. MPs apply water in several pin streams while PGPs spray in a jet-spray pattern similar to a garden hose.

- Ornamentals require 20 minutes, twice per week.
- Suggestions are approximate.
- Local restrictions may apply.

By diligently monitoring your spray patterns to ensure proper coverage and allowing your system to deliver at least 0.75 inches of water three times per week (adjusting as outlined above throughout the year), you can be confident that your Deans turf specialist will remain vigilant for any other potentially serious causes of brown patches.

As always, Deans will be here to assist in making sure your lawn stays weed and disease free!

