

PLANT DISEASES

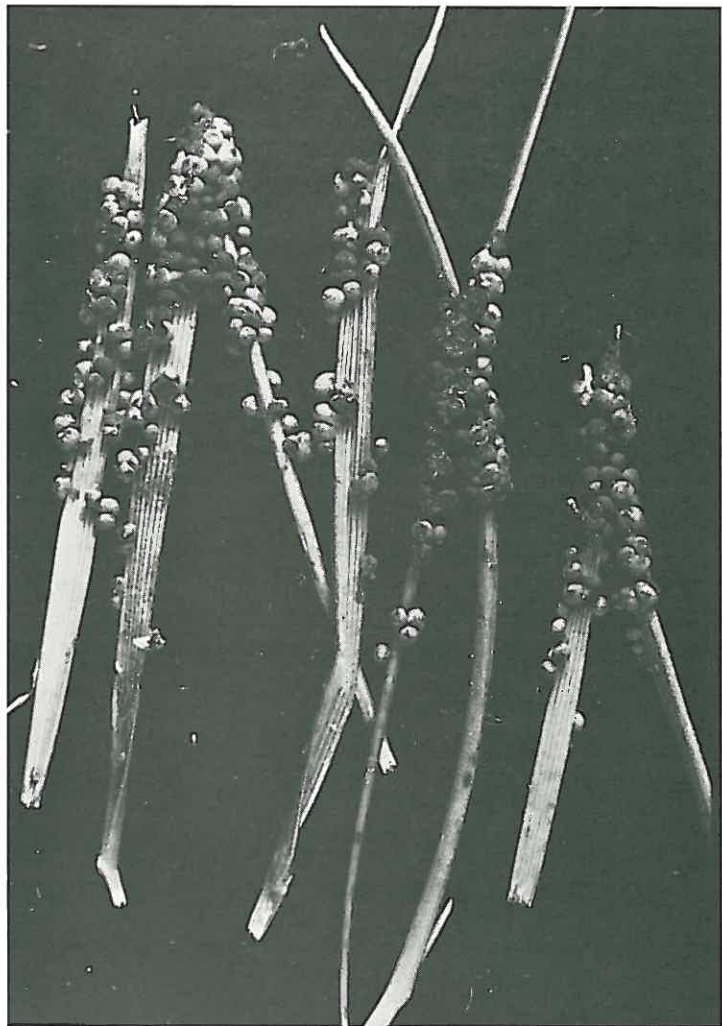
SLIME MOLDS ON LAWNS AND OTHER AREAS

Slime molds are primitive organisms which exhibit characteristics of both plants and animals. They are generally considered to be related to the fungi. Slime molds appear as a thin, slimy sheet during one part of their life, but later appear as powdery structures which may look like round, pinhead-size balls on grass blades (photo).

Thick clumps or layers several inches wide and thick may also occur, depending on the species of slime mold. Some slime molds form very delicate patterns and designs, and the variation in their appearance is extensive.

Slime molds are commonly seen when the weather is moist, especially under shady conditions. They are encountered most often during the warm months. They feed on small organisms which they come into contact with as they slowly move about in the slime stage. They do not feed on grass or other plants, but can make them unsightly by their presence. Under rare circumstances, smothering of plants or plant parts could occur. Slime molds usually disappear after weather conditions become drier.

Control of slime molds is relatively simple. For those small, delicate ones appearing on lawns, mow or rake the lawn. Washing off with water may also help. Removal of slime molds from other kinds of plants may be attempted by



Slime mold often appear on lawns as small, grayish brown, powdery bumps on the grass blades.



washing with water, or perhaps removing affected plant parts. Increasing air circulation around the plant to decrease the moisture can help in preventing their development. Slime molds of the type which form thick layers may be removed with a shovel or by hand.

By Roy M. Davidson, Jr., former Research Technologist, and Ralph S. Byther, Extension Plant Pathologist, WSU Puyallup.
College of Agriculture and Home Economics, Pullman, Washington

Issued by Washington State University Cooperative Extension, Larry G. James, Interim Director, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture in furtherance of the Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914. Cooperative Extension programs and policies are consistent with federal and state laws and regulations on nondiscrimination regarding race, color, national origin, religion, gender, age, disability, and gender preference. Trade names have been used to simplify information; no endorsement is intended. Slightly revised April 1992. A