

## **About Mold on Wheatgrass & Sprouts**

### Introduction

Mold is the bane of all wheatgrass and sprout growers. Although they are unsightly and troublesome, they are not pathenogenic. These molds are not to be confused with the pathogenic e-coli or salmonella which can cause nausea and other symptoms.

The following pages show a lab test report on professionally grown wheatgrass identifying the type of molds found. Following that is more information about those molds by a department of plant pathology.

Be diligent in your sprouting, use good growing equipment, keep them clean and you should expect to enjoy many harvests of fresh, healthy wheatgrass and sprouts.

Steve Meyerowitz, Sproutman®

### LAB TEST

MMI 183 Paradise Blvd., Suite 108 Athens, GA 30607  
Phone: 706-548-4557 Fax: 706-548-4891  
MMI Plant Pathology Report

Name: Drelich Nursery  
Address: 19235 Lake Peckett Rd.  
Orlando, FL 32820  
Phone: 407-568-3545 Fax: -----  
Host Plant: wheat grass (Agropyron sp.)  
MMI Set #: 81311  
Date Sample Received: 6/12/98  
Report Date: 6/12/98  
Pathologist: Dr. Richard Woodward --- Woodward Pathology, Inc.

Please note: Results reported here are based on material submitted to MMI for analysis. All pathology evaluations are subject to the normal limitations of laboratory accuracy. No other warranty is expressed or implied by MMI and its employees or associates. MMI is liable only for the purchase price of the services rendered. Failure to recover a microorganism from a sample does not establish the field or commodity represented by that sample to be free of that organism. MMI and its employees and associates do not recommend use of specific chemicals and only list chemicals (if applicable) that are reported as useful in the literature. Be certain any chemical you use is approved for your crop under the conditions in which you intend to use the chemical. Check with your extension agent and/or chemical supplier for suitability of use under your growing conditions before using any chemical on your crop.

SYMPTOMS: Mycelial growth on media surface

I. FUNGUS TEST RESULTS (1): Probable slime mold (surface mycelial growth)  
Rhizopus sp. (surface mycelial growth)  
Pythium sp. (slight infection, scattered seedlings)

DIAGNOSIS: A probable slime mold was identified on the media surface of the wheat grass flat. The profuse growth over the entire flat and numerous sporangiophores can be characteristic of slime molds. Slime molds may grow at a very fast rate and cover entire surfaces, but slime molds are not pathogenic. Slime molds use the plants for support but do not penetrate the tissue. The profuse growth observed on the flat was easily removed from the seeds, lower stems, and roots of the plants. No penetration of plant tissue was observed. Slime molds are favored by wet environments and feed on dead organic matter. Rhizopus sp. also was identified in the surface growth. Rhizopus is a ubiquitous fungus that grows profusely in high humidity environments. Rhizopus generally is only a problem in storage rot situations, and the fungus has not been reported to be pathogenic on wheat seedlings. Pythium sp. was observed in the root tissue of selected seedlings. The Pythium infection appeared slight and was confined to discrete root sections of smaller seedlings. No pathogenic fungi were identified on the majority of the seedlings.

PP067 (6/00)  
Slime Molds

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Slime molds are highly conspicuous fungi that often seem to "magically" appear on mulch, plants, and turf overnight. The rapid appearance of these nuisance fungi is frequently a cause for misdirected alarm. These fungi have also been the source of countless stories and colorful names such as the "blob" and the "dog vomit fungus."

Slime molds are easily recognized by their brightly colored structures. The most common slime molds on mulch appear as bright yellow, orange, or creamy tan irregular masses. The size of these masses can range from an inconspicuous inch to a dramatic several feet in diameter. True to their common name, slime molds are somewhat slimy when they first form but gradually dry to a powdery brown or tan. On turf, the most common slime molds appear as bluish gray to

purple brown patches which can be as large as several feet in diameter when viewed from a distance. Upon close inspection, individual grass blades are encased by the structure of the fungus. Similar symptoms can develop on woody and herbaceous plants after they have been covered by the superficial growth of the fungus. Although slime molds are not pathogenic to plants, they occasionally cause indirect injury when they cover and shade plant tissues for extended periods of time. Slime molds have no direct economic importance.

Slime molds are fungi in the class Myxomycetes. These are cosmopolitan organisms that feed on bacteria, protozoa, and other tiny organisms. As is the case with other fungi, slime molds reproduce by spores. Once the spores germinate, they go through several developmental stages which eventually result in a feeding stage called a plasmodium. A plasmodium is a multinucleate mass of protoplasm which results from the fusion of amoeba-like cells. This is a "creeping" stage of the fungus so when sufficient water is available, slime molds creep or flow over many types of surfaces. They creep at a fairly fast pace and can actually move several feet in 24 hours. When environmental conditions are no longer favorable for this stage of the fungus, the slime mold forms the more conspicuous and recognizable structure previously described.

The growth of slime molds is favored by cool, moist, shady conditions. However, slime molds can readily grow in open, sunny locations. Since moisture and temperature seem to be the most important factors associated with the occurrence and prevalence of these fungi, slime molds are often more abundant during or after periods of cool, wet weather, especially in spring and autumn. Slime molds have been more prevalent in landscape situations during the past 5 years and this appears to be associated with the weather and the increased popularity and use of wood mulches.

#### Strategies for Control:

Since slime molds are not pathogenic to plants and are considered curiosities and nuisances, pro-active control is not necessary. However, these fungi can be quite unsightly so removal of the structures is often the preferred way of dealing with them. When slime molds develop on mulch, the structures can be removed with a shovel or disturbed by raking. When they grow on plants and turf, slime molds can be removed with a forceful spray of water from a hose. On turf, slime molds can also be effectively removed by mowing. However, if left alone, slime molds will eventually dry up, turn powdery, and disappear.

#### Summary

Slime molds are highly conspicuous fungi that often seem to "magically" appear on mulch, plants, and turf overnight and are easily recognized by their brightly colored structures. The most common slime molds on mulch appear as bright yellow, orange, or creamy tan irregular masses. The size of these masses can range from an inconspicuous inch to a dramatic several feet in diameter. Since slime molds are not pathogenic to plants and are considered curiosities and

nuisances, pro-active control is not necessary. This fact sheet discusses these common fungi and methods to minimize their impact.

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