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**For release: May 11, 2011**

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## **Turf mites may be to blame for brown lawn patches**

*CSU Extension helps homeowners to identify turf problems and solutions*

**Littleton, Colo.** — Is your lawn plagued by patches of straw-colored or silvery dying grass? If so, you are not alone. Many homeowners along the Front Range are seeing their yards awaken to spring, but instead of finding lush, green grass, they are fighting patchy and dying turf.

The damage to the turfgrass may be the result of two pinhead-sized pests: the reddish-brown Clover Mite or the green-colored Banks Grass Mite, according to Arapahoe County's CSU Extension. Turf mites are very small relatives of spiders that thrive by feeding on turfgrasses in warm, dry exposures from January to April.

"Mite injury to lawns is widespread this spring as a result of the very dry winter," said Arapahoe County's CSU Extension Horticulture Agent Robert Cox. "The Extension has received many samples and inquiries about dead lawn patches, and many are the result of turf mites feeding on drought-stressed grass."

Feeding mites can injure large areas of turfgrass on exposures that get more sunlight, such as south and west-facing lawns, particularly those on slopes. The damage can range in size from one square foot to hundreds. In many neighborhoods, all south-facing lawns on one side of the street are affected, while north-facing lawns on the other side of the street are green and unaffected.

Mites can't tolerate moist conditions, so watering during winter dry spells would be the most effective preventative measure. For homeowners facing damage now, small affected areas of turfgrass may recover with watering. However, if the damage is extensive or if the affected areas do not recover by mid-May, consider re-sodding or re-seeding. To establish new seed, use a core-aerator to create holes every two inches and then scatter grass seed over the area. Check with your water district to see if it offers lighter watering restrictions for homeowners who need to water more frequently to establish new sod or seed.

For other lawn problems, the Extension horticulture agent provides on-site LawnCheck consultations for a fee to help with identifying and solving insect, disease and other turf problems. A limited number of appointments are available during the growing season and are scheduled on a first-come, first-served basis.

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CSU Extension horticulturists and volunteer Master Gardeners answer questions about lawn and garden care year-round at 303-730-1920 or by e-mail to [csu-extension@co.arapahoe.co.us](mailto:csu-extension@co.arapahoe.co.us). For more information on lawn and garden care, please visit [www.arapahoeextension.org](http://www.arapahoeextension.org).

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To download photos, click the following link: <ftp://www.co.arapahoe.co.us/pub/cm/Photos/Extension>

*Captions:*

**TurfMiteInjury.jpg:** Brown patches of turfgrass may be caused by feeding mites, which thrive in dry, warm winter conditions.

**TurfMiteInjury2.jpg:** Mite feeding can injure large areas of turfgrass on lawns that get more sunlight, such as south and west-facing areas.