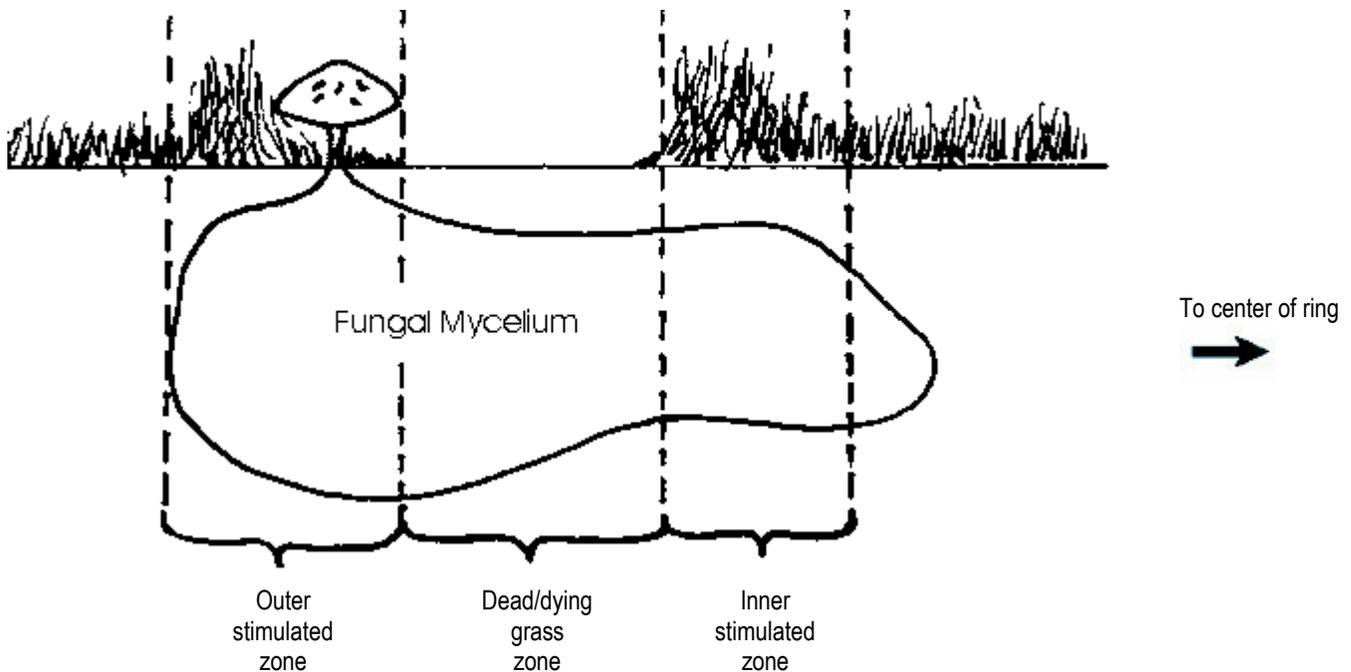


# ***Unique Garden Centre***

## **FAIRY RING**

Fairy ring is likely the most common lawn problem in the prairies. This fungus disease is found throughout the world on all types of grassed areas. Fairy rings are identified by dark green or brown circles and arches in the lawn. During rainy weather, small tan colored mushrooms often appear in the ring. Digging into the fairy ring reveals a white, fibrous growth (mycelium) throughout the soil. As the root-like mycelium spreads, the fairy ring enlarges from the outer edge, anywhere from a few to 60mm (25in.) in diameter per season. The mycelium can become so dense that water is unable to penetrate it. Consequently, the grass above the mycelium dies.

### ***Cross section of a fairy ring***



Fairy ring mushrooms should not be confused with random clumps of mushrooms that also appear during rainy spells or in newly laid sod that is kept constantly moist. These mushrooms are harmless. If you consider them unattractive, pick and discard the mushrooms. They are a great ingredient for your compost.

It has not yet been determined exactly how fairy ring spreads. The mushrooms are the reproductive stage, producing seed-like spores. However, it is not known if new fairy rings ever grow from the spores. The growth of fairy rings is usually halted when they reach sidewalks and cultivated soil, such as flower beds and gardens. Growth also stops when rings grown into one another.

Although fairy rings are common problem, no simple means of control has been found. Some fungicides will kill the mushrooms, but there are none that will kill the fungus in the soil. Fairy rings can grow in any kind of lawn but are more frequently found on dry, under fertilized lawns. Control, then, begins with proper lawn maintenance. Four methods of control or eradication are recommended.

1. MASK the symptoms by heavily watering and fertilizing the entire lawn. This keeps the lawn dark green and the dark green fairy rings are not obvious. This does not kill the fungus.
2. SPIKE AND SOAK the fairy ring to penetrate the mat of mycelium and allow water to reach the grass roots. Use a garden fork or root feeder to aerate the entire ring, and a 20 cm (8") band beyond the inner and outer edges. Water repeatedly to keep the grass soaked. This allows the grass to re-grow which only masks the symptoms. Occasionally, heavy watering seems to kill the fungus.
3. Fairy rings can be removed by digging them out. Begin digging at least 40cm (16") beyond the outer edge of the ring and remove all the soil up to 40cm (16") beyond the inner edge of the ring. The depth of the fungal growth depends on the soil type. The mycelium grows deepest in sandy soils. It is most important that all the fungus is removed or the ring will re-establish. Be careful to keep the infested soil from falling onto the lawn. Fill the hole with topsoil and cover with seed or sod.
4. A biological control method has been tested a few times and may be especially useful where there are numerous rings. Remove the grass over the fairy rings, either by stripping it off (sod harvesters can be rented) or rototilling it into the soil. Rototill the stripped area in several directions to completely mix the soil. Ideally, this is done in autumn and the cultivated soil is left over winter. Once thoroughly mixed, the soil is prepared as for a new lawn and can be seeded or sodded. The same antagonism that causes two rings to die when they meet causes the fungus to die when several rings are mixed together.