

ARTILLERY FUNGUS – WHAT TO DO?

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This past fall, artillery fungus reared its “ugly head,” so to speak. Black spots started to appear on siding, windows, and cars through out our community. Weather conditions were ideal for it to grow as rain and moisture stayed in the ground for longer periods of time. Artillery fungus loves moist landscape mulch and damp weather. Since 2003, we have had what is considered wet years.

Artillery fungus can be present in all mulch products. Studies have shown that it does not grow *as rapidly* in large pine bark nugget type mulch or in large shredded cypress mulch. The large nugget mulch deters it because it stays hard and dry while the cypress has some kind of anti-fungal, anti-decay properties in it. Most mulch today is not bark mulch as in the past, but recycled wood mulch. A mixture of the two has become an industry standard.

In appearance, the fungus is quite small-about 1/10 of an inch across. It is very unlikely to be seen in the mulch. The “spores” shoot up for only a short distance, but wind will carry them higher. The fungus also shoots toward light or highly reflective surfaces-such as light colored siding. Artillery fungus will not hurt you, pets or siding and the fungus will grow better in the mulch on the shady side of your home.

Another avenue we are pursuing is replacing the mulched areas with stone. This appears to be a good long term solution but it will mean **no** planting of flowers or bulbs in the beds around the units. Initially it costs three times as much as mulch, but, once it is in place, up-keep is very minimal.

To remove the “spores” from siding, windows and pillars from your home will take some “elbow grease” and time. I have tried it at my place and it works well but it does take time. First, I took a plastic putty knife to knock the top of the spores off. Then, I took a Mr. Clean Magic Eraser and, with not too much effort, the spots that were left came off. I then wiped the affected area with a mixture of ½ cup laundry detergent, 1 quart Clorox, 2/3 cup Tri-Sodium Phosphate (optional), and 3 quarts of water. Lastly, I wiped the whole area again with water.

Now, as I see the spots, I just take the Mr. Clean Magic Eraser a putty knife and the spores come off quickly. I also bought a garden rake, to disturb the mulch around my place on a regular basis, to keep the mulch as dried out as possible. This will slow artillery fungus but not eliminate it.