

## GREEN, SLIMY, JELLY-LIKE BLOBS OF GOO IN LAWNS

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“What is it?” This strange-looking organism is called *Nostoc*. It is a primitive “plant-like organism”, *Nostoc* sp., a genus of cyanobacterium formerly classified as blue-green algae. Cyanobacteria like *Nostoc* used to be called blue-green algae, but it’s now known that they are not algae at all, though they perform photosynthesis the way algae and plants do. So although *Nostoc* looks like some kind of green slime algae, it’s actually some kind of green slime bacteria. At the microscopic level, *Nostoc* forms long strands of individual cells that multiply by dividing. Colonies can grow large enough to form “blobs” and mats like in the photos.

Following a period of rain or during wet periods, it may appear suddenly in lawns, pastures, paved surfaces, roofs or stones. It can be hazardous on paved surfaces as it is very slippery when wet. When found in lawns, it is generally on a site where the grass is growing poorly due to severe compaction, overwatering or both. It does not caused the lawns to decline; but simply colonized areas of thin turf and where it has favorable conditions to grow. Wet, poor drainage and compacted soils create a favorable environment for colonies of *Nostoc* to grow and expand.

*Nostoc* sp. can be difficult to get rid of. From its gelatinous, green state, it dries to a black crust that comes back to life when there is sufficient water. To discourage its growth, improve drainage and in lawns improve the over-all growing conditions of the turfgrass to maintain a dense healthy lawn. Products that contain potassium salts of fatty acids may be used to kill it in lawns. Use products carefully according to label directions, or damage to turfgrasses may occur. Core aerating the lawn to reduce compaction may help, but tilling

the soil will merely break up the organism and spread it. For paved surfaces and small patches in lawns, scraping it off the surface or shoveling it up and discarding it may be an option. But this may be a short term solution if wet conditions are not remediated.



*Nostoc* Balls and weeds – in a gravel driveway.  
(Photo – courtesy of Don Gallagan.)



*Nostoc* – green slime bacteria.  
(Photo – courtesy of Don Gallagan.)