

NEWS RELEASE

From



ALABAMA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SYSTEM/ LIMESTONE COUNTY OFFICE

Contact:

November 9, 2009

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Mold, Mildew, and Lots of Questions

This week we are going to take a stroll from the garden and look at a problem that has received a lot of attention recently. Most of us have mold and mildew in our homes. We've had a rainy year (that's an understatement), and in addition to the 'normal' mold growth in our homes, the conditions this year have been ideal for molds and mildews to grow and spread at a fast rate.

We've seen examples of water in basements, standing water in yards, roof leaks, septic tanks backing up, water damage seeping into houses – all contributing to mold growth in and around homes.

The key to getting rid of mold is two-pronged: You not only need to clean up the mold, but you **MUST** get rid of the source. Mold thrives in damp, dark, warm environments. It primarily grows on organic materials, but can be found anywhere. If you don't get rid of the source, you will not get rid of the mold.

If there is water in your basement or crawlspace, it has to be cleaned out. If it is not **THOROUGHLY** dried, you will be challenged with issues of mold, mildew, and even bacteria growth if it involves sewage. In extreme cases, carpet may have to be removed. Don't delay this cleanup. The longer it stays, the greater the damage can be.

What is mold? These are simple plants that are part of the fungi family. While they are always present in the air, they commonly become obvious under humid and warm conditions, especially in closed areas. You may also know you have mold and

mildew growth through the presence of musty odors. They are sometimes noticeable in basements and closed rooms. Take special precautions to get rid of mold as soon as possible to prevent further damaging mold growth. Usually musty odors disappear if the area is well heated and dried.

To control mold and mildew in the house, you need to try to control the cause. Check your foundation or basement for cracks and make repairs as needed. Water may also be seeping in around roof lines or through siding. Keep the air circulating when possible. Use fans or even open windows if the outside air is dryer than the inside air. Poorly ventilated closets get damp and musty during damp weather. Try to improve air circulation by keeping the closet doors open during damp periods.

You may find mold and mildew growth on any type of item – from furniture to leather goods to clothing to books. Try to remove mildew spots as soon as you discover them. Brush off any surface growth outdoors to prevent scattering the mildew spores in the house. Sun and air fabrics thoroughly. Wash mildew-stained articles at once with soap or detergent and water. Rinse well and dry in the sun. If any stain remains, use lemon juice and salt or another bleach. One quick and easy home-made solution that you can use to clean the mildew is a mixture of 1 Quart Chlorine Bleach, 2 Quarts Water, and 1 Tablespoon Laundry Detergent.

There are many options to cleaning mildew-infested items in the home. The four things that work best are sunshine, chlorine bleach, acid (such as lemon juice) and salt. Obviously, some of your furnishings will not tolerate chlorine bleach or salt, but there are other options too numerous to list in this article. For more information, stop by the Extension office for a copy of the free publication “Mold & Moisture in your Home” or refer to the website <http://www.epa.gov/mold/moldresources.html>.

We have received inquiries at the Extension Office concerning Mold Test Kits. Extension does NOT sell mold test kits. In fact, according to the Environmental Protection Agency, if visible mold growth is present, mold testing and sampling is not necessary. It really does not matter what type of mold you have, it needs to be cleaned/removed.

And a final note: dead mold may still cause allergic reactions in some people, so it is not enough to simply kill the mold, it must also be removed.

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