Abiotic Turf Problems

(Not caused by insects, weeds, or disease)

Winter desiccation	Large areas of straw-colored grass especially where exposed to wind with little snow cover.
Spring frost damage	New growth killed back.
Water and ice damage	Straw-colored or rotted grass, especially where water collects on frozen soil.
Salt damage	Dead or yellowed grass along sidewalks, driveways, or roads where salt has been applied.
Compaction	Soil is hard. Turf is thick. Rooting is poor.
Acid or alkaline soil	Overall poor growth. Soil test indicates inappropriate pH for grass growth.
Nutrient deficiency	Yellowing or other discoloration; general poor growth.
Overfertilization	Exaggerated turf color, along with rapid growth rate; tissues succulent.
Fertilizer misapplication	Browned streaks lined with extra green growth can occur in areas of application overlap. Yellowed, nutrient deficient streaks may occur in missed areas.
Wilt/drought	Turf loses its luster, appears slightly off-color and “footprinting” occurs.
Poor drainage	Waterlogged soil, puddling.
Scalping	Mowing height excessively low, especially on uneven terrain.
Dull mower injury	Turf develops grayish or brownish cast. Close inspection reveals shredded leaf tips.
Shade	Turf is thin, leaves may appear elongated and succulent.
Poor air circulation	Increased leaf wetness duration, increased disease incidence.
Excess thatch	“Spongy” turf surface, water infiltration problems, thick layer of matter at soil interface.
Excess traffic	Bruising and crushing injury to turf, compacted areas, loss of stand density.

Animal urine	Spots of browned or yellowed turf, perhaps with extra green growth around them.
Gas, oil spill	Sudden scorched areas of turf.