

<https://www.uexpress.com/first-aid-for-the-ailing-house/2014/12/15/artillery-fungus-difficult-to-remove-but>



Q: I read all your columns in our newspaper and clip most of them for later use when something comes up. The one I didn't clip was the one about the tiny black spots all over this person's siding, and what they can do about it. You can't even pick them off. Now I find myself in the same mess -- tiny black spots on my white vinyl fence.

My daughter parks her new silver car in the driveway, and her car is covered with these tiny black spots. Even her car windows are covered! She thought it was sap from a small tree out front, but I don't think so.

I seem to remember your earlier answer: something to do with mulch and spores. Could you run this again and tell us how to remove these black spots? -- Greensburg, Pennsylvania

A: These tiny black spots are most likely artillery fungus, which comes from the decomposition of certain organic mulch in the spring and fall. It does not occur in the winter or summer because of the cold or hot temperatures. The spores can shoot

up to 20 feet or more, hence the name "artillery," and they are particularly visible on light surfaces.

According to an earlier mention of the Penn State Extension Service, this fungus was considered almost impossible to remove without causing damage to the surfaces. Or so I thought, until a reader mentioned that he was successful in doing so following a new Penn State Extension Service report that several people have had good luck with Mr. Clean's Magic Eraser. The trick is to wet the spots first and wait several minutes for the packets to soften. That seems to make them easier to "erase." Another Pennsylvania reader wrote that he finds the spots easier to remove after they have frozen solid over the winter. He uses a plastic scraper and has had good luck with it. My concern is whether it will leave some mark on the vinyl siding or the car.

To prevent recurrence, you can add new organic mulch yearly in the spring, remove the organic mulch and replace it with new mulch yearly or use cypress mulch, which seems immune to the formation of artillery fungus. Rubber mulch is another option; it comes in small brown pellets.