

# Botrytis Blight of Ornamentals

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This past winter has been very difficult on both plants and growers. Many woody ornamentals suffered from cold damage such as tip dieback, cracked stems, and leaf and flower bud death. Bedding plants have suffered from having to be held too long in the greenhouse, often causing

flower drop and senescent foliage. These injured and senescent tissues are very susceptible to disease, especially *Botrytis* blight.


*Botrytis cinerea*, commonly known as "gray mold," is the most common pathogen in any greenhouse, nursery, or landscape. The fungus attacks all above ground plant parts of a wide variety of herbaceous and woody ornamentals causing blights of flowers, leaves, and shoots. *Botrytis* initially attacks senescent or decaying tissues such as old flowers and leaves, as well as tissues predisposed by poor nutrition, low temperatures, and low light. The pathogen then spreads from the dead plant parts into living tissue. Often, *Botrytis* causes leaf spots on bedding plants when infected flowers drop onto leaves.

*Botrytis* is readily identified in a humid environment by its sporulation. On infected plant parts, a gray-brown mycelial web and grape-like clusters of spores (conidia) are easily seen with the aid of a hand lens and often can be distinguished by the unaided eye. The spores are dry and are easily dispersed by air movement. Overhead watering and rain also disperses the spores because the force of the water droplet landing on a leaf creates a shock wave that dislodges the spores into the air. Spores also may be carried on the surface of splashed water droplets to adjacent or nearby plants. Pick up a plant with *Botrytis* sometime and gently flick the infected plant part; a cloud of spores can usually be seen floating in the air above the plant.

*Botrytis* infection is favored by high humidity, moist conditions, and stagnant air. Control of *Botrytis* includes sanitation, environmental modification, and fungicides. Prune dead and injured stems from cold damaged plants, clean the ground (and the inside of pots) of dead, fallen leaf litter and remove yellowing leaves from the base of

plants, increase plant spacing to allow for better air circulation, lower humidity levels by avoiding overhead irrigation, and use protective fungicides to reduce *Botrytis* spread. As you move infected plants around, *Botrytis* spores will be released into the air and land on nearby plants. This is why fungicides play an important role in *Botrytis* disease control. Spray a protective fungicide after the plants are free of blighted tissue. Consult your county agent or the Georgia Pest Control Handbook for specific fungicide recommendations for your particular plant.

## WOODLAND MOSS



Woodland moss creates the scents and textures of a relaxed woodland setting. This natural green moss is clean, light and feathery. Used for lining of wire hanging baskets. Top dress potted plants (indoor and outdoor), or use in terrariums.


**GROWER/RETAIL SIZES:**

- 3.25 cu. ft. bale
- 8" x 6" x 8" mini-bale &
- 410 or 820 cu. in. bags

### NORTHLAND MOSS

Long grained Sphagnum Moss, loose in 2 cu. ft. bales. Just soak & line baskets, window boxes, etc. Used for moisture retention and insulation. Easy to work with.

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