

CONTROL OF CAMELLIA FLOWER BLIGHT

Camellia flower blight caused by Sclerotinia camelliae was particularly severe in the Bay Area last spring because of a prolonged rainy season. The disease could reach epidemic proportions next spring if the fallen, blighted blossoms are not collected. Sclerotia (hard, black fungus structures) have formed in the base of the fallen, blighted blossoms. These will germinate next year during the blooming period producing spores which can infect the flowers.

Removing all fallen blossoms from the growing area is the most effective method of controlling this disease. However, Alameda County tests have shown that a PCNB fungicidal spray applied to the soil surface is also highly effective as a method of preventing germination of the sclerotia. The soil surface should not be disturbed after treatment.

Timing of the PCNB application is not critical, but it should be made in the winter or early spring prior to the appearance of the earliest blooms. One application of 3 lbs. (75%) PCNB wettable powder per 1000 sq. ft. has given good results in this area.

Dimethoate Not Effective

Last fall a report was published suggesting that dimethoate (Cygon 2-E) controlled flower blight. A. H. Mc Cain, Extension Plant Pathologist and T. G. Byrne, Farm Advisor, tested several rates of dimethoate applied as soil drenches and foliar and flower bud sprays. The higher rates defoliated the camellias in the test, but flower blight occurred on all of the plants. The Camellia varieties were C. M. Wilson, Debutante and King's Ransom.

Laboratory tests were then conducted to determine if dimethoate exerts a direct effect on the fungus. 50 parts per million of the fungicide in agar medium did not effect the growth of the fungus.