

DISEASE CONTROL IN BEDDING PLANTS

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The control of damping-off diseases of bedding plants was covered in the January issue of the Greenhouse Newsletter (No. 44). This article will continue with foliage diseases encountered during the growing season.

BOTRYTIS. Botrytis blight is the most serious disease affecting bedding plants. This is especially true in plastic greenhouses where the humidity often remains high for long periods of time.

Botrytis is easily identified by the fuzzy, grayish spore masses produced over the surface of dead or older plant parts. The fungus grows best at temperatures of 45-60°F, but is able to grow slowly at 32-36°F. Growth is checked at 70° and inhibited at 86-95°F. Free moisture is necessary for 8-12 hours for spore germination and infection.

CONTROL. Heating and ventilating the greenhouses to keep the humidity below 80% is one of the best ways to prevent this disease. In plastic houses, fan-tube ventilation is recommended. Chemicals that can be used are: Benomyl 8 oz. per 100 gals.; Daconil 1 1/2 lbs. per 100 gals.; and Termil (Thermal dust).

OTHER foliage diseases include Stemphylium leaf spot of balsam and phlox; Alternaria leaf spot of zinnia and carnation. These problems can be controlled with periodic applications of maneb or zineb.