

GERANIUM LEAF BREAKING AND LEAF CURL

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Geraniums are subject to several virus diseases which are rarely destructive but often troublesome. Leaf breaking and leaf curl are two of the most common virus diseases encountered by commercial growers.

Although caused by different viruses, they have one characteristic in common; they both seemingly disappear during the long-day months. Many severely infected plants which look on the verge of death make a rapid recovery and appear to outgrow the disease. However, cuttings made from these plants will carry the virus and the disease will reappear during late winter and spring.

Leaf curl or crinkle, as it is sometimes called, is characterized by malformed young leaves which are covered with small, colorless spots. When held up to the light, the spots appear as tiny, light transmitting windows. This should not be confused with oedema, a physiological disorder characterized by small, watersoaked spots which eventually dry out, turn brown and become corky.

As the disease progresses, small dead areas may appear in the spot. Occasionally, severely affected leaves turn yellow and drop off. Ridges of corky tissue sometimes occur on the main stem and petiole.

Leaf breaking virus affects the purplish pigments in the leaves. Depending on the degree of infection, variety and other factors, the purple coloration may be completely suppressed or rearranged as purple spots along the veins.

Infected leaves are smaller in size than healthy leaves and often appear light green.

Control of both virus diseases involves the use of virus-free cuttings. Any plants showing symptoms of either virus should be destroyed as soon as symptoms appear to avoid spreading the viruses.