

Non-Pathogenic Fungi in the Green House*

Les Nichols

Extension Plant Pathologist
Pennsylvania State University

"GROWERS OFTEN become alarmed when they see large masses of fungi growing on the surface of seed flats, on peat pots, or on the lower stems of snapdragons or chrysanthemums growing under moist crowded conditions. Most of these fungi are non-pathogenic and will *cause little or no damage to the plants*. Some of these non-pathogenic fungi are as follows:

Fungi growing on the surface of seed flats: When soil is steamed in seed flats, most pathogenic and non-pathogenic fungi are killed. An unbalanced situation then exists and heat resistant non-pathogenic fungi of the *Pyronema* group often grow luxuriantly over the surface of the soil. A thin, whitish, moldy growth first appears, and then reproductive structures are formed which give the whole area a bright orange or yellow color. These fungi are harmless to the seedlings and usually disappear within a few days. Other harmless fungi such as the bread molds or *Mucors* also may grow over the surface of the soil of seed flats.

Fungi growing on the outside of peat pots: The surface of peat pots seems to be an ideal medium on which the *Pyronema* fungi will grow. A thick coating of these fungi may be found growing on the outside of peat pots in moist areas. They will not harm the plants growing in the pots.

Fungi growing on lower stems of snapdragons and chrysanthemums: Pure white lacy strands of a fungus often are found growing on the lower leaves and stems of mature snapdragon and chrysanthemum plants growing in crowded moist conditions. This is *Botryosporium* fungus and is harmless to the plants.

Slime molds: A low form of fungi known as the slime molds may grow in the soil of pots or benches. When the slime mold reproduces, it grows up from the soil onto the lower stems and leaves of plants and a variety of gray to black fruiting masses are formed. These masses may be only one-eighth of an inch in diameter or they may be several inches long. The large black-colored masses are very conspicuous but they do not harm the plant and usually can be washed off with a stream of water from the hose.

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“Flying Fungi”: Occasionally growers may find gummy black balls slightly smaller than BB-shot (small buckshot) appearing on leaves and stems of plants and even on the surface of the pots. These structures apparently come from nowhere. Actually, they are the fruiting bodies of *Sphaerobolus*, a form of wood-attacking fungus found in older wood-framed greenhouses or in newer houses where bark or sawdust may be used. The fungus itself is found on moist portions of wood and is rather inconspicuous. When the fungus reproduces black spore cases are formed which are forcefully ejected and may fly through the air for up to 18 ft. where they may land on the plants and pots. Hence, the apparent mysterious appearance of the black balls. The spore cases are harmless to plants.”
