

## Poinsettia Disease Management

The major disease problem in Poinsettia production is the root and stem rot complex caused by one or more of the following: Thielaviopsis basicola, Rhizoctonia solani, and Pythium sp. These organisms all survive in soil and are favored by excessive moisture and crowding of plants. Some report that this disease complex is more severe at high (86° F.) or low (63° F.) soil temperatures.

Symptoms are stunted plants that wilt easily and lower leaves that become chlorotic (yellow) and drop off. Stems appear water soaked and later become dark brown. Roots are rotted and discolored. Each fungus may produce the above symptoms independently or they may interact and produce a rapid decline.

From my experiments with Thielaviopsis basicola and from the reports of others, the following control practices should be considered. Plant disease-free cuttings in soil treated with steam or chemicals. If Thielaviopsis basicola root rot has been a problem for you even after steam or chemical soil treatment, experiments have shown that mixing into the soil 3-6\*ounces benomyl (50 percent) and 2-3 ounces of Dexon per cubic yard before planting well-rooted cuttings will reduce the loss of plants to root rots. If Pythium occurs after rooting, drench with Dexon at the rate of 3 ounces (35 percent) per 100 gallons at 2-4 week intervals.