

Greenhouse Pest Message, November 6, 2024
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Poinsettia season is well underway. Most of the poinsettia are looking great and ready to get out the door. There are still potential issues to watch out for, including with physiological disorders that may look like a pathogen problem. These are easily mistaken for diseases even though there is no pathogen involved. Below are a few important examples.

Poinsettias can be susceptible to **sunburn**. This tends to be worse with dark-leaf varieties. Watch for sudden changes in light intensity that cause leaf burn (for example with shade removal, if you are using shade). Sunburn tends to be worse under high temperatures and when plants are under water stress. Leaves develop discolored patches, and then curl inward and dry up. It may be apparent on one side of the plant depending on where the sun is.



Fertilizer burn can affect plants at young growth stages. This can be caused by foliar applications of fertilizers that are at an excess concentration. Try to avoid rapid drying of fertilizer on foliage of young plants. Avoid high P fertilizers in propagation.



Plants can develop **pesticide burn** by any number of chemistries used in the greenhouse. These are often difficult to diagnose because they may appear like a fungal or bacterial spot. Recently, Floramite burn was observed that looked very similar to a leaf spot. Below in the first picture is Pylon burning green leaves. The second picture shows a fungicide applied without Capsil or another surfactant. Note how the product has accumulated along the leaf veins, that can lead to high localized concentrations and burning of bracts.



Light and heat stress can lead to uneven bract development and coloring. The reasons for this are usually apparent in the greenhouse, such as plants situated along a dark siding or shade. High night temperatures >73 °F in mid to late September (flower initiation time) can lead to “heat delay”. High average daily temperatures also contribute. Monitor temperature at the plant canopy level periodically, especially around flower initiation. Be aware of heaters and extra warm locations within the greenhouse. The picture below shows plants that were near a heater.



Leaf drop can sometimes occur for no reason at all. This is often cause for concern, but may not be caused by anything other than plant stress. Older cultivars tend to be more susceptible to leaf drop. Moving plants from a humid to dry range can also cause stress leading plants to shed leaves. Be on the lookout for this issue. If it appears uniformly for one cultivar, it likely will not need any further treatment.

All photos courtesy of Harvey Lang.