Greenhouse Pest Message, November 26, 2025
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The fall season is well underway. Overall, poinsettias look excellent in greenhouses around the state, and are heading out to stores and other customers. There is very little pest pressure on the poinsettia crop. *Botrytis* can infect rapidly and without warning, and can be problematic just before shipping or during transport. Management of gray mold includes cultural controls and fungicide application as discussed here. Once poinsettias are shipped there will be a little bit of a break and a chance to clean out and sanitize benches and greenhouses.

Below are some of the pathogen and nutrient issues that have been observed recently.

Poinsettia latex eruption

Plants within Euphorbiaceae contain latex that exudes when cells are injured. High turgor pressure within the plant can lead to ruptured leaf cells that exude latex onto the leaf surface. Occasionally, this disorder can look like mealy bug infestation.

Management:

There is no known cause to latex eruption. High soil moisture and high humidity contribute. High humidity at night is a known contributing factor. Latex eruption is not a problem for most cultivars.

Copper deficiency

A relatively uncommon nutrient deficiency for poinsettia. Symptoms appear as chlorosis along the margins of leaves. Necrosis can also develop in severe cases. It is notable that copper deficiency appears differently on numerous plant species. A more commonly observed symptom is curling of leaves and stunting.

Management: foliar copper sprays and using a fertilizer that contains balanced micronutrients. This is an uncommon deficiency in most production settings.

Pythium root rot (*Pythium ultimum*) of poinsettia

Pythium is found in most greenhouses and on many ornamental crops. This is a common root rotting pathogen affecting poinsettia and other potted flowers. Plants are stunted and can wilt under water stress conditions. Uprooted plants have roots that are brown and disintegrating leaving a "rattail" appearance. The pathogen grows rapidly and produces an overwintering spore (oospore) that can withstand chemical treatments and desiccation. The oospore allows pythium to persist in greenhouses and plumbing in recirculating irrigation systems.

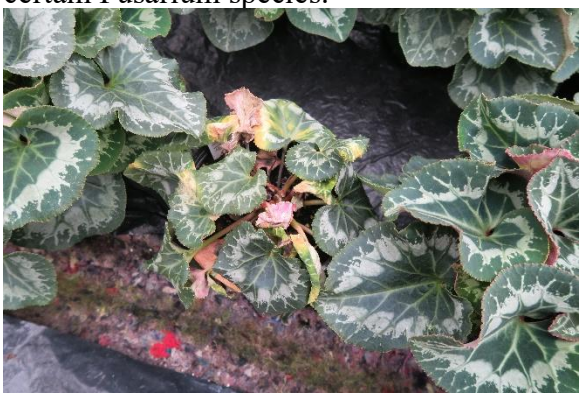
Management: focuses on sanitation to limit the introduction of the pathogen and fungicide drenches. SubdueMaxx, Segway, and Terrazole are the top products for pythium control. Keeping media as dry as possible is helpful as overly saturated media favors the pathogen.

INSV of Bearded Tongue

INSV is one of the most common viruses in ornamental production. The virus causes a variety of symptoms on different species of crops, however, necrotic spots and concentric rings are the most common symptom. There are 100s of species of bedding plants and perennials that are affected. The virus is transmitted by thrips. Control of thrips is essential to management of this virus. Rogue out diseased plants that can harbor the virus in the greenhouse, acting as an inoculum source.

Fusarium basal rot (*Fusarium oxysporum*) of cyclamen

Fusarium root rot is a very destructive disease of cyclamen. Symptoms include yellowing, stunting, and eventual plant death. Often bulbs arrive infected from the fields where they were produced. Fusarium is very common in field soil and is transported with the bulbs, often without obvious symptoms. A dissected bulb reveals brown discoloration. Wilting onset may be sudden when plants are stressed.
Management: management includes a multifaceted approach with sanitation, clean planting material, and fungicide drenches. Newer fungicides in the SDHI class (FRAC Group 7/11) are highly effective against certain Fusarium species.



Boxwood leafminer (*Monarthropalpus*)

A common pest of boxwood in Connecticut. The pest affects all species of boxwood, although, American boxwood is more susceptible than other species. The insect produces blister-like spots on the leaves. Eventually, defoliation occurs and the plants become unthrifty. Leaves can be dissected to reveal the yellow larvae. A number of insecticides with systemic activity are registered against this pest.

Photo credit: Emily Leahy, UConn

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Ranunculus gray mold (*Botrytis cinerea*)

Botrytis blight of ranunculus is a common problem on this crop. Leaves develop small lesions that continue to expand causing large brown lesions on the leaves and stems. Stems can also be infected at the soil-line killing the entire plant.

Management: Limit overhead watering to the morning. Reduce relative humidity and improve airflow around plants. Apply fungicides or biocontrols when necessary.