Greenhouse Pest Message, February 28, 2026

Charles Krasnow, UConn Extension

Despite the snow last week, spring is not too far off. Greenhouses are starting to fill up with spring crops. Pansies are planted and growing in greenhouses around the state. There was no reported damage to greenhouses from the heavy snow earlier this month. Well constructed greenhouses that are heated are less likely to suffer snow damage. Smaller structures are more at risk, especially structures that are not heated, allowing snow to accumulate. The type of snow also matters, and a light fluffy snow is less likely to be an issue than a mix of snow and rain, or if there are thawing temps immediately after the storm.

Some recently observed plant issues highlighted below.

Hydrangea Botrytis Blight

Botrytis gray mold is extremely common in the greenhouse, including on potted hydrangea. Hydrangea are resilient and are affected by a limited number of pathogens in greenhouse production. Botrytis can cause leaf spots or infect at the lower stem causing a wilt. Sporulation of the pathogen is abundant on the stem, and spores can easily spread to neighboring plants. The cooler temperatures and lower light of winter favor gray mold.

Management: Limit overhead irrigation to the morning. Reduce relative humidity and improve airflow around plants. Apply fungicides or biocontrols when necessary. Numerous fungicides are registered for this pathogen. Check the UConn IPM page for recommendations on Botrytis control.

Sunflower Phytotoxicity

This phytotoxicity was caused by a high rate of Eagle (myclobutanil). This is an effective fungicide that has a broad range of pathogens listed on the label. Fungicide labels usually specify crops that are sensitive to the fungicide, especially large acreage crops. Sometimes, niche crops may not have been tested. It is recommended to test any pesticide on a small number of plants prior to widespread adoption to ensure phytotoxicity does not develop.

Management: There is no corrective action once a crop has phytotoxicity. Minor damage is usually cosmetic and not an issue. Significant phytotoxicity can result in loss of the crop.

Lavender Leaf Tip Dieback, Unknown Cause

Spanish lavender with tip dieback was observed in the greenhouse. The leaves were initially healthy but the leaf tips became discolored, and eventually desiccated. Only a few branches were affected on a given plant, and only one lavender cultivar out of eight was affected. The tip dieback was observed on mostly older leaves. This symptom is commonly observed on lavender, however, the cause is not clear. It most likely is a nutrient issue, potentially aggravated by low media pH.

Uneven Rooting of Fuchsia

Rooting of certain crops can be challenging, and sometimes can be an indication of other issues in the greenhouse. In this case, the uneven rooting of fuchsia cuttings was caused by a partially blocked irrigation boom nozzle. The plants pictured were moved from the original location.

Management: Discard seriously affected trays. Uneven rooting is unfortunate, and can disrupt planning and timing of a crop. In some cases, trying to salvage trays can lead to weak seedlings.

Powdery Mildew of Kalanchoe

The florist kalanchoe is a flowering succulent that is widely popular. This plant is relatively easy to grow with few problems. Powdery mildew is very common on these and other succulents. The symptoms are not always easy to diagnose like on herbaceos flowers (sunflower, dahlia, verbena, etc.). On succulents a scab like lesion or necrosis can appear. Often, “powdery” mildew can also be observed.

Management: This pathogen does not need free water to infect, even in a relatively dry greenhouse it can appear and cause damage. There are a number of safe and effective fungicides and biological controls that can

be used to prevent powdery mildew. Some varieties have known tolerance to the pathogen. Use care when selecting a surfactant for use on succulents.

Overwintering Evergreen Shrubs

These overwintering shrubs appeared healthy, despite the very cold temps last month. There is likely some water stress and desiccation. Last spring there was extensive winter damage to many woody shrubs from a combination of cold temperatures, high light intensity and wind. The evergreen shrubs are more susceptible to damage than deciduous, as they continue to transpire and photosynthesize, even at a very slow rate. Even cold hardy evergreen shrubs can suffer from winter damage.

Shrubs like the ones pictured are protected from wind from behind a greenhouse which is helpful in limiting damage. For specimen plants, wrapping can help to reduce wind damage and prevent branch breakage from snow and ice. Plants that are in pots should be mulched in to improve the chances of winter survival.