

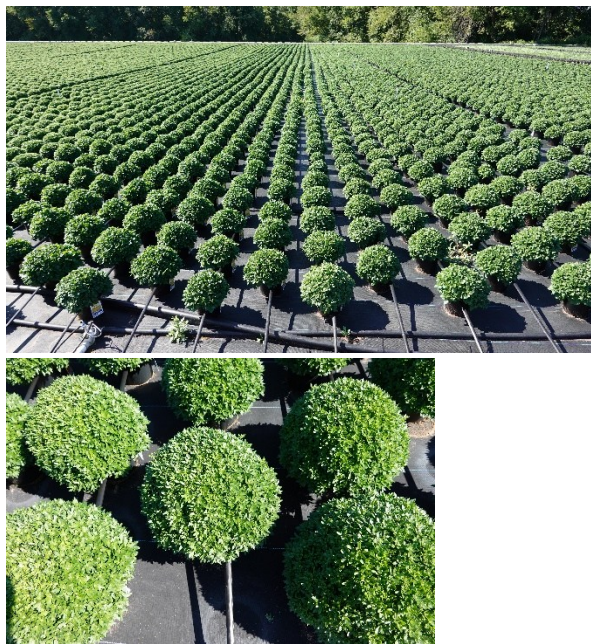
Greenhouse Pest Message, August 28, 2026

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The summer has been warm and sunny, with rain and cooler temperatures in the forecast for this week. The shorter days and cool nights promote powdery mildew, and downy mildew has been observed on a number of crops including coleus, sage, impatiens, and agastache. There have been no major issues reported on mums or poinsettia. A few minor issues, like dry-down over a hot dry period, and bacterial blight in a corner of a field. Overall, both crops are growing strong.

UConn is back in session for the fall semester and there is much excitement around Storrs for the start of the school year and Husky athletics.

Below is a mum field in central CT. Beautiful mounding habit for this mum crop. Looking forward to seeing these in full flower.



Below are listed plant diseases and disorders seen this month.

Snapdragon rust (*Puccinia antirrhini*)

A rust was found causing damage to snapdragons in the field. This rust affects all commercially grown varieties of snapdragons. It causes small pustules to form on the leaf underside, that eventually rupture releasing brown spores. Snapdragon is the only known crop affected by this rust species.

Management: Rusts are important pathogens of numerous ornamentals, especially certain perennial crops, roses, and grasses. Rusts do not usually cause major losses. Apply a rotation of fungicides, including BannerMaxx, Eagle, Heritage, and Daconil Weatherstik. Torque, Eagle, and Terragaurd showed high efficacy in a UConn trial.



Christmas cactus (*Schlumbergera*), Phytophthora stem rot (*Phytophthora nicotianae*)

Phytophthora rot is a very common pathogen worldwide. This pathogen is not as common as pythium in greenhouses, but is much more aggressive. The primary species

is *P. nicotianae*, that is commonly found infecting many ornamentals including vinca and petunia. This pathogen spreads on cuttings, and in irrigation water as swimming zoospores. Splashing water can transfer the spores of the pathogen to neighboring plants.

Management: as *Phytophthora* is an oomycete (watermold) it spreads rapidly in high moisture and irrigation. Remove diseased plants from the production area. Apply fungicides preventively, including Phostrol, Segovis, Subdue, Stature, Micora, and Adorn.



Poinsettia unusual growth (abiotic)

Unusual growth of poinsettia is surprisingly common. This irregular growth of young leaves around the time of pinching is caused by a variety of factors. MSU and UMass have factsheets that describe “Various types of distortion” and “possible causes of distortion” because of the many possible factors involved. There is no single cause that has been determined for this type of distorted growth. Overhead fertilization, physical damage during pinching, dramatic changes in temperature and moisture, have all been attributed to these symptoms. Usually, the plants grow out of it without any treatment necessary. The poinsettia pictured below may have had excessive

irrigation, leading to distorted and low nutrient leaves.



Zinnia powdery mildew (*Erysiphe cichoracearum*)

Powdery mildew is extremely common on many crops. The pathogen can survive in dry conditions and spreads rapidly when conditions are favorable. Zinnia with powdery sporulation and necrotic leaves were found in a greenhouse and outdoor growing area. This powdery mildew will spread to other crops like sunflower, dahlia, coreopsis, and more.

Management: Reduce relative humidity and improve airflow around plants. Apply fungicides or biocontrols when necessary. There are numerous good fungicides and biocontrols with activity against this pathogen.



Gray blight, leaf spot of Kalmia
(*Pestalotiopsis chamaeropsis*),

Kalmia latifolia with leaf spots and leaf blight was observed in a nursery. The leaf spots started at the margins, and coalesced completely covering the leaf. Some cultivars are highly susceptible to the leaf spot, and usually symptoms are noticed after pruning. A white fungus was consistently isolated from the leaves consistent with *Pestalotiopsis chamaeropsis*. This is a common wound-pathogen in nurseries on woody ornamentals. The fungus typically infects wounded leaves.

Recommendations: Apply systemic or contact fungicides after pruning. This is a wound-pathogen, and in general a secondary invader. Use drip irrigation where possible, or irrigate in the morning to allow time for leaves to dry during the day.



Sedum stem rot, (*Fusarium* spp.)

Sedum grown outdoors that was wilting with stem rot was observed in a covered area of a nursery. The stems and leaves were wilting, however, the rot was not slimy. Infected stems from three plants isolated onto agar Petri dishes yielded a *Fusarium* spp. This is typically a root rot pathogen, however, on succulent plants it can cause a leaf spot and stem blight.

Recommendations: Apply a fungicide rotation including Empress, Medallion, Mural, Postiva, Pageant, and 3336. The pathogen is likely splash dispersed from infected plants to surrounding plants. Ensure care during irrigation. Propagation material may also have been the source of the pathogen.



Mum stem breakage, mechanical

A chrysanthemum with wilting foliage was observed. The plant appeared to have a root rot, however, there was insect damage at the crown of the plant. The stem had broken at the weakened crown, leading to wilt symptoms. No preventive controls necessary.

