

Plant Survival 101

Learn the treatment for common plant diseases to revive your near-dying plants

Words *Michelle Angela Carag*

JUST LIKE HUMANS, PLANTS GET SICK, TOO. Save your beloved greens from unwanted diseases by familiarizing yourself with the possible infections that plants may get. That way, you can take immediate action and minimize the damage.



POWDERY MILDEW affects a whole host of plants, including herbaceous and many ornamental

plants. It first appears as white, powdery spots that may form on surfaces of leaves, on shoots and sometimes on flowers and fruits. These spots gradually spread over a large area of the leaves and stems.

! Look out for white, powdery fungus coating on the leaves.

Treatment: Remove and destroy all infected parts of the plant and be careful not to transfer spores to healthy foliage. Try not to add too much nitrogen-rich fertilizer, which promotes sappy growth and makes the plant more vulnerable to fungi. If you're opting for chemical solution, choose a fungicide containing penconazole. But if you're leaning towards organic treatment, go for a dispersible sulphur spray.



BOTRYTIS (or Gray Mold) is often found in flowers, especially those which are kept in very humid

conditions. This fungal disease attacks flower heads, leaves and stems.

! Look out for squishy and black flower

center, brownish-black leaves and stems, and rapid spreading of abnormal color.

Treatment: Pick off the affected parts and destroy all plants which are severely affected. Increase space between plants to reduce humidity and encourage air movement. Avoid over-feeding your plants with a high nitrogen fertilizer as this encourages soft lush growth that makes them more susceptible to attack. The recommended organic remedy is lime sulphur.

TIP: Since there are no fungicide treatments currently available in the market, you can make an organic fungicide at home by mixing one teaspoon of baking soda with 1/4 teaspoon of horticultural oil in one quart of warm water. Spray frequently on suspected botrytis victims.



CLEMATIS WILT mostly strikes clematis plants, particularly early, large-flowering

varieties. It causes rapid wilting and, in severe cases, can kill the whole plant.

! Look out for diseased shoots which are already turning brown and are hanging loosely from the main stems.

Treatment: Cut out all affected shoots and, if the entire plant is affected,



DAMPING-OFF DISEASE is extremely common in seedlings. It is usually caused by over-

watering, crowding of seedlings, poor air circulation, dirty containers or contaminated water.

! Look out for rotting emerging seedlings at soil level. They collapse easily and lose their leaves early.

Treatment: Sow your seeds thinly in good compost and clean pots. Water them moderately with fresh water. Also, make sure there is the necessary

ventilation. Opt for chemical treatment like copper-based fungicides.



LEAF SPOT is a common plant disease that is easily noticeable and is caused by a combination of bacteria and fungi.

! Look out for spots on the foliage. These spots can be of various colors such as gray, brown and black. Concentric rings or a dark margin around the spot may be present. Over time, the spots may combine to enlarge and form blotches. Leaves may yellow and drop prematurely.

Treatment: Remove and destroy all infected foliage immediately. To reduce the chances of re-infection, prune shrubs and water sparingly for a few weeks. For a non-organic treatment, spray with fungicide containing myclobutanil and continue spraying at fortnightly intervals throughout the season. ⬆

Anchor photo courtesy of 45KX.HUP