

Wallsend Nurseries

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Powdery Mildew

There are many species of powdery mildews that attack a wide range of plants. Some are restricted to a few related hosts and others have a wide host range. They are favoured by moderately dry conditions when nightly dews or periodic irrigations are sufficient for spore germination and infection.

Powdery mildews commonly infect cucurbits, especially rockmelons and apple cucumbers.

Symptoms are similar in all cases of powdery mildew infection regardless of the host involved. Circular white spots develop on older leaves and stems. These spread rapidly, finally covering the whole surface and the leaves wither and die. Growth is checked, cropping is reduced and fruit exposed to the sun will often become sun burned. Huge numbers of spores are produced on the powdery surface and these are dispersed by the wind over a large area.

By the time the disease symptoms appear the foliage that is infected is already too far damaged to repair. Prevention is therefore the best way of controlling mildew effectively.

Control methods.

Grow a tolerant cultivar whenever possible as these are far less likely to suffer major damage from disease attack.

Chemical controls are available but will only be really successful if they are applied as a preventative measure before the plant is actually infected.

Yates Mancozeb® Plus or Bayer Bayleton® are both efficient control chemicals. These need to be applied regularly throughout the growing season at the recommended rates and timings. Ensure when spraying that you maintain thorough coverage of the foliage surfaces, both upper and lower as well as stems.

Another fungicide that is useful is Triforine®. This is mainly used on roses and works well if it is sprayed on a regular basis.

Regular spraying will ensure a barrier is created between the leaf surfaces and the fungal spores which are produced in vast numbers.

Remove any fallen foliage from around the plants as this also harbours the fungal spores and serves to reinfect a newly planted crop.

All cultivars of of pumpkin, marrow, squash, and gramma are susceptible as well as most cucumbers

Resistant cultivars of rockmelons include “Planter’s Jumbo” and “Early Dawn”

Unfortunately all cultivars of apple cucumber are susceptible at present so appropriate spraying will have to be carried out for efficient control.