



DISEASE MANAGEMENT: Wet Rot, *Choanephora* blight



Choanephora cucurbitarum

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS:

- Water soaked lesions appear on the leaves and the margins and leaf tips are blighted.
- Older lesions turn necrotic and appear dried out.
- The entire plant may wilt.
- Flowers and flower buds turn dark and wilt.
- Young fruit can be infected.

DISEASE CYCLE & EPIDEMIOLOGY:

- This disease is not common on pepper plants in Florida.
- The fungus has a wide host range such as yellow squash and some common weeds.
- Outbreaks of this disease occur during extended rainy periods and high temperatures.

FIELD SIGNATURE:

- 'Whiskers' of the fungus, which are fungal strands, with dark-colored, knobby sporangia, can be seen with a hand lens.
- Morning is the best time to look for the fungus.
- Symptoms may be confused with *Phytophthora* blight (*Phytophthora capsici*).

PHOTOS:

Figure 1. Silvery whiskers grow out of infected areas, topped with black spore masses. Courtesy of: AVRDC.

Figure 2. Most of the time, it seems to start in senescing flower petals. Once established, entire flowers are overgrown, resulting in a brown to black mass of soft tissue. Flower stalks, buds, and leaves may subsequently be invaded. Photograph by: UF/IFAS.

Figure 3. Close-up of sporulating fungus on leaf surface. Photograph by: UF/IFAS.

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CULTURAL CONTROLS:

- Any method which increases air movement in the crop canopy to reduce the humidity may aid in management. Examples include:
 - Increase plant spacing
 - Adequate drainage
 - Avoid overhead irrigation
 - Avoid excess nutrition which creates a dense canopy

RESISTANT CULTIVARS:

- There are no resistant cultivars for tomatoes or peppers.

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CHEMICAL CONTROL:

- There are no fungicides labeled for this disease. Sprays for other fungal diseases may reduce disease damage.



Figure 4. Symptoms of *Choanephora* blight on pepper showing tip die-back. Courtesy of: UF/IFAS.

References:

Kucharek, T.A., G.L. Benny and K. Pernezny. 2003. *Choanephora* Blight (Wet Rot), pp. 11-12. In K. Pernezny, P.D. Roberts, J.F. Murphy and N.P. Goldberg (eds.), *Compendium of pepper diseases*. American Phytopathological Society Press, St. Paul, MN.