## *Sclerotinia sclerotiorum*

### SIGNS & SYMPTOMS:

- Sclerotia can form on plant surfaces, but are particularly abundant inside infected stems.
- Fruit exhibit a watery soft rot.
- Water-soaked lesions appear on stems. Stems turn to a bleached gray-white, causing them to appear like animal bones left in the sun **(Figure 2)**.
- All or portions of plants with infected stems develop a general wilting symptom.
- The best indicators of white mold are signs of the pathogen, consisting of white fungal growth (mycelium) and sclerotia **(Figures 1-3)**.
- Sclerotia are small, hard resistant structures that look like bits of black coal **(Figure 3)**.

### DISEASE CYCLE & EPIDEMIOLOGY:

- White mold is a cool, moist weather disease; ideal temperatures for white mold are 60-70°F.
- High humidity, rainfall, and heavy due periods favor disease development.
- Small, mushroom-like structures develop from sclerotia **(Figure 4)**. These produce spores in abundance which are carried on air currents to tomato and pepper plants.

### FIELD SIGNATURE:

- Be on the lookout for white mold when daytime highs are consistently in the 70's or lower.
- Blooming periods are critical times for *Sclerotinia* infection, because the pathogen invades dying flower petals caught in crooks of stems.
- The presence of mycelium and, especially, black sclerotia confirm white mold **(Figures 2 & 3)**.

### PHOTOS:

**Figure 1.** Poor stand in pepper field with white mold. Photograph by: Ken Pernezny.

**Figure 2.** White mold growth evident on damaged pepper stem. Photograph by: Ken Pernezny.

**Figure 3.** Sclerotia inside infected tomato stem. Photograph by: Ken Pernezny.

*Prepared by: Dr. Ken Pernezny*

# DISEASE MANAGEMENT:
# White Mold of Tomato & Pepper

## CULTURAL CONTROLS:

- Every effort must be taken to avoid overly dense plant canopies, as poor air circulation aggravates white mold.
- Rotation with crops other than tomato, pepper, potato, and snap bean may help reduce levels of initial inoculum.

## CHEMICAL CONTROL:

- Very specific fungicides are needed to control white mold.
- Several special exemptions for fungicides (e.g., thiophanate-methyl) have been granted in the last few seasons for white mold control. Check with your cooperative extension agent for current legal alternatives.

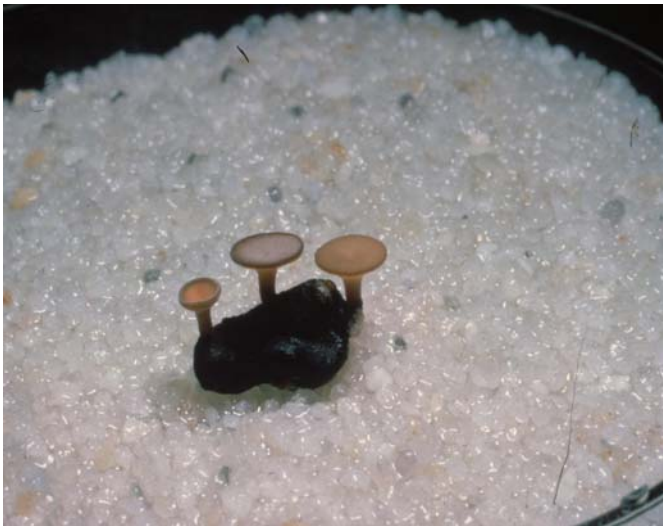

**Figure 4**. Apothecia of *Sclerotinia sclerotiorum* germinating from a sclerotium, these can be found in the field while scouting. They are about the size of a grain of rice. Photograph by: Pete Adams.

## RESISTANT CULTIVARS:

No known resistance to white mold is currently available for either tomato or pepper.

## CONTACT INFORMATION:

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## References:

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