

URBAN FARMER

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Disease Control: Powdery Mildew

Powdery Mildew sounds similar to another somewhat common plant disease called Downy Mildew, but the two diseases are actually completely different.

What is it?

Powdery Mildew is a fungal disease which affects many different kinds of plants, and it takes away the plant's nutrients. Once Powdery Mildew has infected a plant, it will then lead to less blooms and an overall weaker plant. Powdery Mildew comes in many different species, and each species attacks a different type of plant. However, unlike most other fungal diseases, Powdery Mildew actually prefers a hot, dry climate instead of a cooler, wet climate. Yet, despite thriving in a hot, dry climate, Powdery Mildew actually requires relative humidity to spread to other plants. In cooler, rainy areas, Powdery Mildew doesn't spread well.

Once Powdery Mildew infects a plant, it is spread by spores. The spores are spread by the wind and can infect many other plants this way. Sometimes, Powdery Mildew can even get severe enough to kill entire plants.

When a plant has been infected with Powdery Mildew, it will appear the plant has been dusted with flour. In the beginning, Powdery Mildew will appear as circular white spots on leaves, stems or even the fruit of a plant. Typically, Powdery Mildew covers the tops of the leaves, but it can often be found on the underside of the leaves too. Younger leaves are the most susceptible to damage from the disease. Once Powdery Mildew has infected a plant, the leaves will



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turn yellow and then dry out. Sometimes, the fungus can cause stems, leaves or fruit to dry up and break or become disfigured. The disfiguration won't appear until usually later in the growing season.

How to cure it:

Once you have diagnosed Powdery Mildew, the first step is to remove all infected parts of the plant and destroy them. Do not add them to the compost pile because this could further spread the fungus through your garden. After you have removed all the infected parts of the plant, treat the fungus with a fungicide. If you would like to go the organic route, use organic fungicides such as sulfur, lime-sulfur, neem oil or potassium bicarbonate.

How to prevent it:

The best way to prevent Powdery Mildew is to plant are resistant or certified disease free. Another preventative method is by not partaking in overhead watering to reduce



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the relative humidity. Prune overcrowded areas in your garden to increase airflow. Spray your plants periodically with a fungicide or, for someone who wants to use more organic methods, a bicarbonate solution. To create a bicarbonate solution, mix 1 teaspoon of baking soda with 1 quart of water and spray plants all over, as the solution only kills the fungus if it comes into direct contact with.

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