

# BOTRYTIS

## Damage symptoms

The most common symptoms include blight, leaf spot, damping-off, and stem cankers. If humidity reaches 85% or more, a fluffy, grayish to brown fungal growth may appear on infected plant parts. Symptoms of “Gray Mold” depend on the host and environmental conditions of your greenhouse. Optimum conditions for symptom occurrence are 64-82°F and high humidity.

## Host plants

Botrytis is present in all greenhouses and attacks most herbaceous ornamentals grown in the Northeast. It causes significant loss during storage and shipment of flowers and cuttings.

## Disease characteristics

Botrytis prefers to invade immature, senescent and wounded plant parts or flower petals. This disease can spread to healthy plants if infected plant material or organic matter comes in contact with disease-free plant tissue. Initial infections are not easily detected. As time passes and conditions in the greenhouse become favorable for the pathogen, symptoms will appear, sometimes in less than 24 hours. Botrytis spores are small, dry, easily dispersed in the air or with water, and carried from plant to plant by insects. Free moisture is needed for germination and infection. This fungus can overwinter in dead plant material or survive in soil as sclerotia.

## Management

Control is difficult because the pathogen can infect any part of the plant at any stage of development and attacks a wide variety of species.

- ✓ Reduce humidity and increase temperature and airflow.
- ✓ Turn up the heat and vent for 2-3 cycles at dusk.
- ✓ Use disease-free stock.
- ✓ Clean up and sterilize your equipment, including tools.
- ✓ Space plants on benches so they don't touch and allow for good air flow.
- ✓ Avoid wetting foliage when watering, particularly later in the day.
- ✓ Inspect incoming material.
- ✓ Before introducing a new crop, destroy weeds and old plants, and remove all plant debris.
- ✓ Fungicides are available for use.



*Geranium plants showing severe symptoms of Botrytis blight.  
Notice the grey mold on the leaf indicated by arrow.*



*Leaf with signs of leaf spotting caused by Botrytis.*