



Preventing Plant Diseases

Cheryl A. Smith

Professor & Plant Health Specialist

UNH Cooperative Extension

Prevention is always the best remedy. Good SANITATION is the best prevention and control method for problems caused by disease-causing microorganisms and many insects.

- **Inspect all in-coming plant material.**

Refuse shipments that appear to include diseased or infested plants.

- **Sanitize cutting, planting and pruning tools before each use & between plants.**

Any plant tissues infected with disease-causing microorganisms can serve as a source of infection for nearby plants. Infected leaves, branches or stems should be removed and destroyed. If a large portion of the plant is infected, it may be better to remove the entire plant.

- **When watering, avoid wetting the foliage if possible.**

This splashes and spreads fungal spores and bacteria to adjacent plants. Water early in the day so foliage has time to dry before evening. Cool, wet conditions promote growth of fungi.

- **Whenever possible, try to reduce the relative humidity and increase air circulation.**

Increasing plant spacing and thinning plantings can improve airflow, allowing plants to dry more rapidly after wetting.

Proper horticultural practices also reduce plant stress. Match the plant to the site -- shade-loving plants in shady areas, winter-hardy plants in exposed areas, etc. Water, light and proper nutrition are also key factors to monitor and adjust when necessary to avoid stressing plants. Remember, plants under stress are usually more susceptible to attack by both disease-causing organisms and insect pests.