Powdery Mildew

Powdery Mildew is probably the most common fungal disease found in gardens. It's prevalent all across the country and affects vegetables, perennials, annuals, shrubs and trees. Powdery Mildew harms plants by disrupting photosynthesis and stealing nutrients from the leaves. Left unchecked, powdery mildew can cause leaves, and sometimes entire branches, to yellow and die.

Identification

Luckily, powdery mildew is one of the easiest garden diseases to identify. It forms a white, chalky powder, almost like talcum powder, that covers the top sides of leaves. This powder is actually tiny fungus spores that send root-like tubes into the leaves, sucking out nutrients.

Control

Cultural Practices - Unlike other fungi, powdery mildew only needs two things to grow; heat and humidity. Crowded, wet gardens create the perfect microclimate in which the fungus can thrive. Prune overcrowded plants and space new plants apart to improve air flow. Water directly to the soil and avoid overhead watering and watering at night. Also, avoid using high nitrogen fertilizers in the late summer, which forces the excess growth of tender new plant material that is susceptible to fungus.

Fungicides - There are several easy, organic fungicides that will kill powdery mildew. Fungicides are most effective when combined with the above cultural practices and when applied early on. Most fungicides will require multiple applications, so apply them at 7 to 14 day intervals throughout the season. As always, read directions carefully and use sparingly.

Sulfur

Sulfur is one of the oldest horticultural fungicides. Be sure to read all instructions when applying as sulfur can damage some melon and squash varieties

Neem

Neem oil is an effective organic fungicide and insecticide. Apply oils in the morning or evening to avoid leaf scorch during the hot afternoon.

Actinovate

Actinovate is an OMRI certified organic fungicide that contains beneficial microorganisms that attack harmful pathogens and fungi.

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