



Greenhouse TPM/IPM Bi-Weekly Report
University of Maryland Cooperative Extension
Central Maryland Research and Education Center

From: Stanton Gill, Extension Specialist – IPM for Greenhouse and Nurseries, CMREC, University of Maryland Extension
Karen Rane, Extension Specialist, Director of the Plant Diagnostic Clinic, University of Maryland Extension
Suzanne Klick, Technician, CMREC, University of Maryland Extension

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**An Interesting Plant for Fall Sales? -
*Plectranthus***

Last week, while visiting Catoctin Mountain Growers, a really fetching purple colored flowering plant caught my eye - *Plectranthus*. I had not run into this plant before and did a web search for information on this unusual short day blooming plant. *Plectranthus* is native to South Africa and a member of the mint family (Lamiaceae). There are many species of *Plectranthus* (around 44) that are currently used as ornamental herbaceous plants throughout the world's gardens. They come in a number of shapes and colors ranging from white, pink to dark mauves, and lavenders. This plant is easy to propagate from cuttings.



The genus of *Plectranthus* includes common plants such as creeping charlie and Swedish ivy. Although many of the plants in this genus have a habit of creeping, 'Mona Lavender' has beautiful dark green leaves with contrasting undersides that are purple and very elegant looking.

In the 1990's, the 'Mona Lavender' was bred at the Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens in Cape Town, South Africa. It was a fairly long process involving much hand pollination and the raising of many thousands of seedlings, back crossing, and raising many more thousands of seedlings - each time selecting out the best, most attractive individuals to go through the next round of breeding. Ball International Company released *Plectranthus* 'Mona Lavender' plant and it is worth looking into for fall sales.

'Mona Lavender' is a quick-growing perennial shrub, reaching 24 to 30 inches in height but it is not winter hardy here in Maryland. It is ideal for fall sales since customers will need new plants each year. It does very well in either shaded or partly sunny positions. When it receives sun it tends to stay smaller and more compact, and the leaves exhibit a much more intense coloring, especially on the purple undersides of the leaf. The foliage is unique and special, but the real

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prize on this plant is the dark lavender flower spikes. 'Mona Lavender' is ideal for a mass planting in your garden or for container gardening. Like most *Plectranthus* species plants need a fair amount of water. The plants benefit from being pinched back to induce better branching and compactness.

Pests: This plant is new in the horticulture business and I could not find any references that list potential disease or insect pests. Give any plant enough time and it will develop problems with both insects and diseases.

Eriophyid Mites in Echinacea

In response to the information in the September 4th report, Rick Yates, Griffin Greenhouse and Nursery Supplies, sent an email with a link to an article he found on eriophyid mites and the potential of using a predatory mite for their control:

<http://www.syngenta-bioline.co.uk/controldocs/html/AmblyseiusAndersoni.htm>

Pythium Root Rot in Poinsettia, Karen Rane, Plant Diagnostic Laboratory

(Information originally included in September 26, 2008 report)

To control *Pythium* root rot in poinsettia crops, it takes an integrated approach to really do the job. In a nutshell, keeping the greenhouse clean of soil and debris, keeping plants on the dry side, and maintaining good fertility without raising soluble salt levels too high will minimize *Pythium* problems.

Good sanitation is essential for reducing *Pythium* problems. *Pythium* is a common soil inhabitant, and can be brought into the greenhouse through unsterilized soil, used pots, dirty tools, and benches. Surface water sources such as ponds or streams can also contain *Pythium*; irrigating with untreated pond water may introduce *Pythium* to the crop with each watering. Treatment of pond water may be necessary to reduce this source of disease.



Healthy, white roots on Poinsettia



Discolored, water-soaked root system

Biological fungicides, such as Rootshield (*Trichoderma*) applied early in the season, can provide a good level of root rot control when the amount of *Pythium* inoculum is low. If a greenhouse has a history of *Pythium* root rot, fungicide drenches will help protect plants from infection. Some materials to rotate in applications for *Pythium* include FenStop (fenamidone), Banol (propamocarb), Banrot (etridiazole + thiophanate-methyl), Truban or Terrazole (etridiazole) and Subdue Maxx (mefenoxam). A significant number of *Pythium* isolates are resistant to Subdue Maxx (mefenoxam), so rotation of fungicides is important.

Drs. Roberto Lopes and Janna Beckerman of Purdue University have recently written an excellent article on poinsettia problems, including *Pythium* root rot. The article can be found at: <http://www.ppdl.purdue.edu/ppdl/weeklypics/9-15-08.html>

Aphids on Rudbeckia

Goldenglow aphids are commonly found on rudbeckia and other composite plants. This aphid can range from bright red to a darker amber color. They have dark legs, antennae and cornicles. We are finding them on *Rudbeckia* growing here at the research center. As populations increase, winged forms develop in order to disperse the population. Look for ants tending and protecting the aphids for the honeydew that the aphids produce. Predatory midges (*Aphidoletes* sp.), predatory wasps (*Aphidius* sp.) and lady bird beetles (adults and larvae) are several biological control organisms that help to control aphids.

Controls include: Insecticidal soap, horticultural oil, Acephate (Orthene), Imidacloprid (Merit – landscape, Marathon – Nursery), Dinotefuran (Safari), and Acetamiprid (TriStar).



Goldenglow aphids on Rudbeckia



***Aphidoletes* midge feeding on an aphid found on cabbage**



Potato aphid that has been parasitized by an *Aphidius* wasp



Lady bird beetle larva searching for aphids on cabbage foliage

Caterpillars on Mums

Look for saltmarsh caterpillar moths laying eggs on chrysanthemum stems at this time of year. The larvae feed on the inner growth first, so you have to examine the interior of the plants to detect these caterpillars early. They also feed on mallow, *Eupatorium*, Aster, *Amaranthus*, and *Achillea*.

Caterpillar Control: *Bacillus thuringiensis (Bt)* on early instar larvae or Conserve.



Saltmarsh Caterpillar

Other caterpillars that we have been seeing recently include:



Cross-striped cabbageworm (and a few aphids) feeding on cabbage foliage



Cabbage looper on cabbage



Imported cabbageworm on cabbage



Variegated fritillary caterpillars can still be a problem on pansy foliage at this time of year