



A deadly disease stalks garden impatiens

Dr. Alan Windham is our guest contributor to Chris' Corner this month. He has some very important information about impatiens to share with our readers.

Dr. Windham writes:

Garden impatiens (*Impatiens walleriana*) is one of the most popular bedding plants grown in American gardens. It flowers and grows well in shade. However, downy mildew, a new disease of garden impatiens, has made it more difficult to grow and enjoy this colorful annual.

Downy mildew was first found on garden impatiens in U.S. landscapes in the Midwest and Northeast in 2011. To the chagrin of home gardeners and professional landscapers alike, by 2012 the disease was found on garden impatiens in all regions of Tennessee and every state east of the Mississippi River. This year the problem may be widespread.

As the University of Tennessee Extension plant pathologist, it pays to know the symptoms of downy mildew. Early symptoms include light green, curled leaves. Later, infected plants may drop all their leaves and stop flowering. Often, white fungal growth may be observed on the underside of leaves.



I recommend that flower consumers be cautious. When buying impatiens this year, look for healthy plants free of the fungus. If you lost your impatiens to downy mildew last year, you might consider planting an alternative bedding plant such as begonia, coleus, New Guinea impatiens or SunPatiens.

For more information on downy mildew and other disease and insect problems in your garden follow the UT Extension Soil, Plant and Pest Center on Facebook at: <https://www.facebook.com/SoilPlantPestCenter>

I would like to thank Dr. Windham for that important information. I know that many of you are ready to start planting your summer annuals. Be sure to always check your plant material for diseases and bugs. Until next time, happy gardening!



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