e-GRO Alert

Nora Catlin
nora.catlin@cornell.edu

Volume 12 Number 9 February 2023

Leaf Spot on Calibrachoa

Calibrachoas with a concern of a virus disease were scouted. Thankfully, no virus infection was detected, however Cercospora leaf spot and powdery mildew were instead identified.

When a grower called to ask about calibrachoa viruses, Margery Daughtrey, from the Long Island Horticultural Research and Extension Center, and I went to scout the crop to see if we saw any troubling symptoms

Cercospora leaf spot on calibrachoa.
Photo: Margery Daughtrey

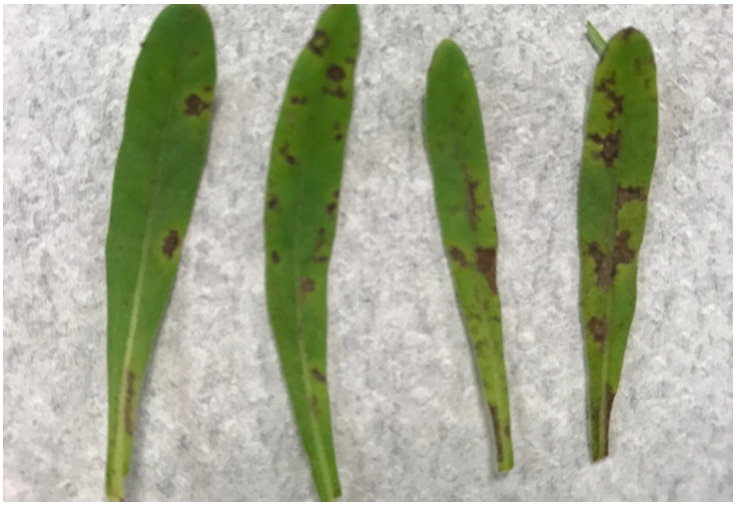
Thankfully, none of the plants had obvious symptoms of the viruses commonly known to infect calibrachoa (or positive test results). However, we did notice a couple of other issues including leaf spots and lower leaf necrosis.

The leaf spots were cultured in the diagnostic lab and the fungus *Cercospora* was found. Cercospora leaf spots are common on a number of ornamental

plants; pansy, zinnia, rudbeckia, and hydrangea are commonly affected. There are various species of *Cercospora* that can cause leaf spots on different plants, some are host specific and will only infect a limited number of hosts.

Typically leaf spots begin as round or slightly angular dark lesions, and fade to brown or tan as they age. The lesions are often surrounded by a colored border or halo, usually purple or yellow in color.

Cercospra leaf spot can be managed by avoiding overhead irrigation, this limits the spread of the fungi by splashing and also reduces the leaf wetness needed for infection. If overhead irrigation cannot be avoided, time your irrigation so that the foliage dries as fast as possible to reduce the length of time that the leaves are wet (e.g., when feasible, avoid watering prior to sunset or on overcast days). Removing infected plants and plant debris will help reduce inoculum. Treating with a labeled fungicide will help protect plants from further infection. Products containing active ingredients in the stobilurin group (FRAC Group 11) are known to be particularly effective, DMI-fungicides (such as propiconazole) and



Cercospora leaf spot on calibrachoa.
Photo: Margery Daughtrey

chlorothalonil would also be useful in a rotation. Other contact materials and biological products are also labeled. As always read and follow all label recommendations and instructions.

The lower leaf dieback we observed was found to be powdery mildew. Powdery mildew, typically easy to identify, is often missed on calibrachoa. The telltale and obvious white fungal growth is not always easily observed by eye, and the samples need to be viewed carefully with magnification. See these previous e-Gro Alerts on calibrachoa powdery mildew: https://www.e-gro.org/pdf/2020_912.pdf and https://www.e-gro.org/pdf/2015_436.pdf

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www.e-gro.org

CONTRIBUTORS

Dr. Nora Catlin
Floriculture Specialist
Cornell Cooperative Extension
Suffolk County
nora.catlin@cornell.edu

Dr. Chris Currey
Assistant Professor of Floriculture
Iowa State University
ccurrey@iastate.edu

Dr. Ryan Dickson
Greenhouse Horticulture and
Controlled-Environment Agriculture
University of Arkansas
ryand@uark.edu

Thomas Ford
Commercial Horticulture Educator
Penn State Extension
tef2@psu.edu

Dan Gilrein
Entomology Specialist
Cornell Cooperative Extension
Suffolk County
dog1@cornell.edu

Dr. Chieri Kubota
Controlled Environments Agriculture
The Ohio State University
kubota.10@osu.edu

Heidi Lindberg
Floriculture Extension Educator
Michigan State University
wolleage@anr.msu.edu

Dr. Roberto Lopez
Floriculture Extension & Research
Michigan State University
rglopez@msu.edu

Dr. Neil Mattson
Greenhouse Research & Extension
Cornell University
neil.mattson@cornell.edu

Dr. W. Garrett Owen
Sustainable Greenhouse & Nursery
Systems Extension & Research
The Ohio State University
owen.367@osu.edu

Dr. Rosa E. Raudales
Greenhouse Extension Specialist
University of Connecticut
rosa.raudales@uconn.edu

Dr. Alicia Rihn
Agricultural & Resource Economics
University of Tennessee-Knoxville
arihn@utk.edu

Dr. Debalina Saha
Horticulture Weed Science
Michigan State University
sahadeb2@msu.edu

Dr. Beth Scheckelhoff
Extension Educator - Greenhouse Systems
The Ohio State University
scheckelhoff.11@osu.edu

Dr. Ariana Torres-Bravo
Horticulture/ Ag. Economics
Purdue University
torres2@purdue.edu

Dr. Brian Whipker
Floriculture Extension & Research
NC State University
bwhipker@ncsu.edu

Dr. Jean Williams-Woodward
Ornamental Extension Plant Pathologist
University of Georgia
jwoodwar@uga.edu

Cooperating Universities

Cornell CALS College of Agriculture and Life Sciences

Cornell Cooperative Extension Suffolk County

PennState Extension

Iowa State University

UTIA Institute of Agriculture, The University of Tennessee

UConn

College of Agricultural & Environmental Sciences, University of Georgia

Michigan State University

University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture, Research & Extension

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