DAMPING-OFF
(*Pythium*, *Rhizoctonia*, and others)

Damping-off occurs when seeds or young seedlings are destroyed by soil-borne pathogens. Infection that takes place on seeds or before the seedlings emerge is known as pre-emergence damping-off. When seedlings have already emerged above the soil line and are attacked at the roots or below the soil, the disease is called post-emergence damping-off.


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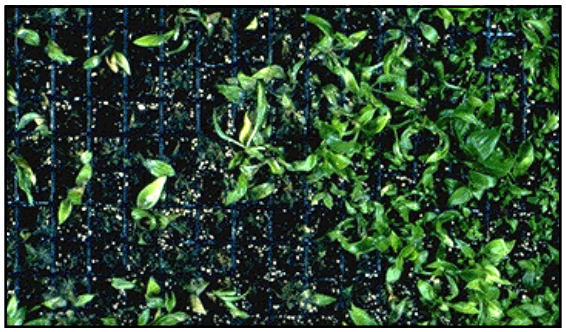
Damping-Off

Seeds become soft and mushy, then turn brown, shrink, and finally disintegrate. Infected areas become water-soaked and discoloured. Damaged stems cannot support the plant so it falls over onto the soil where further infection occurs.


J. Matteoni

Damping-Off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Pythium Damping-Off

Life Cycle

The two main damping-off organisms, *Pythium* and *Rhizoctonia* normally infect only plants under stress, for example, improper temperature or excess water. *Pythium* can be introduced via contaminated water, or soil, and infected plant tissue. *Rhizoctonia* survives in contaminated soil and on plant tissue. Successive plantings of the same crops and soft growth due to excess nitrogen can lead to infection problems.

Hosts

Damping-off may occur in the seed or seedling stages of all plants.

See Also:

Root Rot

Wilt

Disease Cycle of Damping-off and Seed Decay, caused by *Pythium* spp.