

# Root Rot Diseases of Ornamentals

Disease Profile  
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By: Stephen Vann

Many landscape ornamentals are susceptible to root rot during early spring, especially during periods of frequent rainfall. Most ornamentals do not thrive well in soils that remain wet for extended periods, so ornamentals grown in soils with high clay content are often more at risk than those grown in well-drained soils.

*Phytophthora sp.*, *Pythium sp.*, and *Rhizoctonia sp.* are common soil-inhabiting fungi that attack woody and herbaceous landscape plants, especially in water-saturated soils. Initial symptoms of root rot include the yellowing and subsequent wilt of the plant. Roots become brown-black and tissues can easily be removed.

Houseplants that are watered too frequently are particularly vulnerable to attack by root rot fungi. In the greenhouse, root rot is often associated with damping-off symptoms. Young seedlings often wilt and die a few days after germination. In most cases, several root fungi may attack the developing plant.

Prevent root rot by watering plants on a schedule and improving soil drainage as necessary. Several soil-applied fungicides are available, but they are costly and results may not be consistent.

**BYLINE:** Stephen Vann is an associate professor and Extension urban plant pathologist with the University of Arkansas, Cooperative Extension Service.