Slugging it Out; Some Trade Events; a Lupine Challenge

News and commentary for the perennial market

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Perennial PULSE

News and commentary on the global perennial plant market

COMING UP THIS WEEK:

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What's Happening Here?

Let's start the newsletter with a diagnostic challenge. Here's an issue I see somewhat frequently on lupine:

It may not be occurring as prevalently as I've observed in the past, but it still creeps up on growers from time to time. As you can see, there are two types of symptoms occurring on this lupine—a leaf spot and a blight. Are these related or are they different? More importantly, do you know "What's Happening Here?"

Stay tuned, I'll reveal the answer in a few minutes.

Managing Snails and Slugs

It's the time of year when mysterious holes begin to show up in perennials, such as salvia and hosta, to name a couple. I've covered this topic in the past, but my colleague JC Chong, who writes the awesome *PestTalks* newsletter, recently shared some excellent information on snails and slugs that I'd like to pass along. Now allow me to pass the baton over to JC:

"Some of us are in the unenviable position of listing slugs and snails as major pests. Unlike spider mites and whiteflies, there are few products we can just spray and see a reduction in population and damage from slugs and snails. Management of these mollusks truly requires a good understanding of their habits. The California Nursery Pest Snails and Slugs website provides good information on how to develop a management program.

"The first step in management is not to pick out which bait to use. Instead, determine with some confidence that the damage you see is indeed caused by slugs or snails. That can be more difficult than you think, because the damage by mollusks is similar to the damage caused by many foliage-feeding insects. Slugs and snails aren't out to be seen during the day and you may not see slime trails. You should set up a beer trap (or sugar water and yeast) to capture the culprits if you suspect slugs and snails. By the way, don't count on beer traps to be an effective mass-trapping tool. Also, dump and refill the traps regularly to make sure there are liquid in the traps to attract and kill the mollusks.

"Then you proceed to proper identification, just like what you'd do for spider mites and whiteflies. Knowing the identity of the snails and slugs will give you a good idea of their habits and the best treatment method and timing. I can usually guess the identity of a snail or slug based on its appearance and habitat, but for a more accurate identification, I go to the Terrestrial Mollusk Tool, where I can use keys to identify the species. The Terrestrial Mollusk Tool also contains many fact sheets on various species.

“The abundance of snails and slugs are tied to the amount of moisture in the environment, so moisture control (for example, irrigating early in the day to allow the floor to dry and using drip irrigation) is an easy way to make a habitat less hospitable to snails and slugs. Cleaning up debris and hiding places (such as stacks of unused trays and pots) denies them food and shelter. Increasing your plant spacing also helps reduce moist, shaded habitats.

“Strategically placed pots and boards can serve as traps instead of shelters. How frequently you check the pots and boards makes all the difference. If you want to create an ideal habitat, don’t move or disturb these pots and boards. If you want to use them as traps, these boards should also be checked regularly so that the snails and slugs hiding underneath can be killed or removed before they do damage.

“Wrapping bands of copper flashing, copper screen or spraying copper sulfate around the legs of benches can prevent mollusks from climbing up. Copper fungicides don’t contain enough copper to serve this purpose, not to mention that the products aren’t registered for such use.

“The most effective method of reducing snail and slug abundance is applying baits. Snail and slug baits contain metaldehyde, iron phosphate or spinosad. Metaldehyde baits are more effective during warm days, but they're poisonous to pets. Iron phosphate baits are safe to use around children and animals. Read a good summary of the pros and cons of each bait type on the California Nursery Pest Snails and Slugs website.

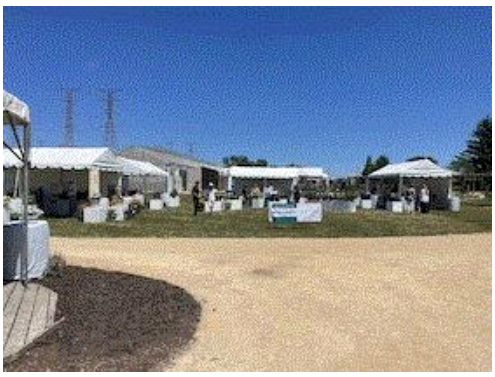
“There's no biological control option for nurseries unless you consider herding ducks through rows of trees or pots as an effective method. A nematode, *Phasmarhabditis hermaphrodita*, is being used as a biological control agent in Europe. This nematode species is also found in California, but a product containing this nematode species is still some way from being registered.”

JC also shared a link to a recorded invasive snail and slug webinars from the Washington Invasive Species Council in case you’d like to dive deeper into the subject.

Thank you, JC, for continuously cranking out content growers can use. Click HERE to sign up for *PestTalks* if you don’t already receive it.

Darwin Perennials Day

Summer is nearly here, and if you love perennials as much as I do, I can’t think of a better way of spending the first day of summer, June 21, than attending Darwin Perennials Day Garden Extravaganza at Ball Horticultural Company in West Chicago, Illinois.



Beat the heat (the forecast looks fabulous!) and see the hottest new perennials from Darwin Perennials, Kieft Seeds, Walters Gardens, Must Have Perennials and other top companies. Enjoy hundreds of perennial varieties on display in the gardens, trial beds and in containers; meet with dozens of suppliers; and enjoy the Perennial Program Idea Exchange, led by Danny Summers of The Garden Center Group and featuring a panel of influential garden centers who will share unique concepts and survey data to help you increase sales and connect with customers.

Date: Wednesday, June 21, 2023
Time: 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. CDT
Where: The Gardens at Ball, 1017 Roosevelt Road, West Chicago, Illinois
Event Info: www.darwinperennialsday.com
Cost: FREE
Value: Priceless!

More Summer Trade Opportunities

Here are several industry trade events I thought you might be interested in. Perhaps you can tie some of them in with a vacation and enjoy a tax write off! Click the title of the event to learn more.

June 22-24	FNGLA's Annual Convention Sarasota, Florida
July 9-12	Garden Center Canada Summit Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada
July 15-18	Cultivate '23 Columbus Ohio
July 24 – August 4	Michigan Garden Plant Tour Various Locations
July 24-28	Perennial Plant Association National Symposium Niagara Falls, Canada
July 25-26	Lucas Greenhouse Summer Trial Monroeville, New Jersey
July 27-28	Ball Seed Customer Days West Chicago, Illinois

The Answer is…

I showed this image of lupine at the top of the newsletter and challenged you to determine its cause:

I'm hopeful most of you correctly guessed this one. However, there's no shame if you didn't. I also pointed out that there were two distinct symptoms—a leaf spot and a blight. Is there one or are there two issues going on here? I'm not a pathologist and these plants were not submitted to a laboratory for diagnosis, but if I were a betting man, I'd say there is only one problem occurring on these plants. Is that what you are thinking, too?

If you're with me on this one, your answer is colletotrichum (an anthracnose disease). Colletotrichum is typically a leaf spot disease that forms half-moon shapes on the edges of the leaves. Under severe infestations, it can progress to cause cankers on stems and kill entire branches. Therefore, the blight you are seeing is also most likely caused by colletotrichum.

Fusarium is a crown and stem rot disease that also causes lupine leaves and stems to collapse. However, fusarium does not develop leaf spots and is more aggressive and would most likely kill the entire plant. Only the leaves are blighted in the image above; the lower stems and crowns of the plants shown are not affected (or should I say infected). Therefore, I suspect only colletotrichum is the culprit in this case.

The occurrence of colletotrichum can be reduced by reducing free moisture on the leaves and by providing a preventative fungicide spray program. I find Orkestra (or Pageant), Phyton 27 and Spectro 90 to be highly effective at controlling this disease when they are applied preventatively. Consider rotating between these products at 14- to 21-day intervals when the disease is not present and applying them more frequently (weekly) when symptoms are actively developing.

Thanks for reading this edition of *Perennial Pulse*. My email is paul@opelgrowers.com if you have any comments, article suggestions or if you'd just like to say hello.

Best regards,

Paul Pilon
Editor-at-Large—*Perennial Pulse*
Director of Growing—Opel Growers

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