

American Gooseberry Mildew



American Gooseberry mildew is caused by the fungus *Podospheera* (syn. *Sphaerotheca*) *mors-uva* and can cause serious trouble every year on gooseberries and more occasionally blackcurrants. The disease is spread by microscopic spores that are produced from the fungal growth on the leaves, being released and carried by the wind. Although this problem is rarely fatal, it does weaken the plant and spoils the fruit.

Damage:

The first signs of American Gooseberry Mildew are the grey-white powdery fungus that appears in patches on the leaves, shoots and fruit, this later turns brown. The young shoots may be distorted at the tips and die off. The berries turn brown and felt and although they are still edible (if the fungus is scraped off) they are often small and tasteless. In the autumn the signs of mildew can be noticed as dark spots on the fallen leaves. The brown felt may also remain on the bushes or break off and fall to the ground, serving as a source of infection for next spring.

Control:

Non Chemical Control

As a preventative measure allow ample room between bushes when planting and prune regularly to keep them open in the centre, cutting out any congested branches to aid air circulation. Cut back all diseased shoots as soon as they are seen, destroying anything removed. In autumn rake up and destroy infected leaves to reduce the number of fungal spores around next spring. Avoid applying excessive amounts of nitrogen which encourages succulent growth which is very susceptible to infection. Feed instead using a combination of 'sulphate of potash' and 'Nitro-Chalk', or a compound fertilizer such as 'Growmore'. Poor drainage also fosters the disease.

The following gooseberry and blackcurrant varieties that we stock show greater resistance to this disease.

Gooseberries - Hinnomaki Red, Hinnomaki Yellow, Hinnomaki Green, Remarka & Invicta.

Blackcurrants - Ben Connan, Ben Gairn, Ben Hope, Ben Lomand (slight resistance), Ben Sarek.

Chemical Control

There are currently no fungicides produced for use by home gardeners against this disease.

'**SB Plant Invigorator**', which can be used to treat powdery mildew on all fruits, works by physical means only to remove the mildew spores and may give some levels of incidental control against 'American Gooseberry Mildew'. It is a non-chemical and non-biological product and should be applied on a regular basis as a drench spray to both the upper and lower surfaces of leaves from early in the season. Please note that this is not an organic product.

USE CHEMICALS SAFELY: ALWAYS READ THE LABEL

When using chemicals it is most important to follow the manufacturer's instructions precisely. Only use on the fruits that are listed on the manufacturer's label. An accurate weighting machine and measuring cylinder should be obtained. Chemicals can be wasted by making concentrations unnecessarily strong or by making them too weak and ineffective. Furthermore, if chemicals are too strong they may cause some damage to the foliage.