

Grey Mould (Botrytis)

The berries of all kinds of soft fruit may become infected with this. Grey mould is a very common fungus and since it can live on most living and dead plant material, its spores are almost always present in the air. The disease is worse in wet summers, where excessive amounts of fertilizer have been applied and when excessive numbers of new shoots have been allowed to grow on fruit bushes. It is also a big problem in greenhouses where humidity is high.



DAMAGE:

Grey Mould may attack any part of the plant that is above the ground, usually gaining entry through wounds or points of damage. The infected plant tissue usually discolours and growth above points of infection may deteriorate with leaves turning yellow and wilting and flowers or fruits dying off. Fruit infections may originate from infection via the open flowers, the fungus remaining dormant until the fruits ripen. Both immature, and ripe berries become covered with a dense grey fungal mycelium that causes premature drop of the former and makes the latter inedible. The spores are readily spread by rain or water splash and on air currents. The fungus may also over-winter in the soil or on infected plant debris.

Post-harvest decay involves further development of pre-harvest infections. It will develop rapidly and spread to neighbouring fruits even at low storage temperatures

CONTROL:

There is no fungicide available to the amateur gardener to treat this condition.

It is difficult to control this disease as the fungus is so widespread but overcrowding of plants should be avoided and care should be taken that they have sufficient aeration. Any infected areas should be removed immediately, cutting back in to healthy growth. It is also wise to remove any dead or injured plant material before they become infected. Harvested fruits should be promptly refrigerated and consumed within a few days.