Building Block Plant Diseases

Extension
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

Powdery Mildew

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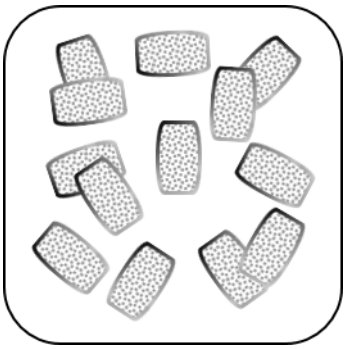
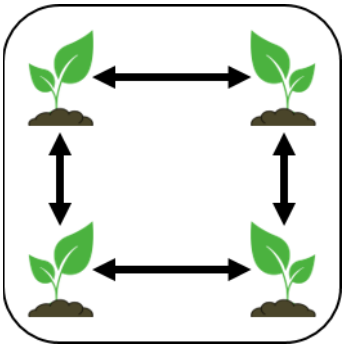
Powdery mildews are common plant diseases. Powdery mildew fungi make white, talcum powder-like growth on leaves of plants like lilac, phlox, and cucumber. Fir, pine and spruce trees do not get powdery mildews.



Growth of powdery mildew fungi is mainly hyphae (fungal threads) and spores (like tiny, fungal seeds) on leaf surfaces. These fungi also form octopus-like structures in outer leaf cells that help suck up plant nutrients.

Most fungi that cause plant diseases like wet, rainy weather. But powdery mildew fungi prefer dry (rainless) weather with super-high humidity. Wisconsin's dry, muggy summers are perfect for powdery mildews.



You can ignore powdery mildews for the most part. They don't cause much damage. You can also use plant types (varieties) that get less mildew. And thin plants and space them far apart to reduce humidity and thus disease.

Revised
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