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### **Impatiens Downy Mildew found in Georgia**

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Impatiens downy mildew, caused by the 'fungus-like' organism *Plasmopara obducens*, was confirmed in the piedmont of Georgia last week. Two separate samples, one from a landscape and one from a nursery, were received and diagnosed in the clinic. The plants in the landscape had reseeded from the previous year which may indicate that the pathogen is overwintering in Georgia. Downy mildew reproduces and spreads in mild, wet conditions, and the rainy weather of the past few weeks were very conducive for disease development.

All seed- or vegetatively-propagated *Impatiens walleriana* (including double impatiens and mini-impatiens) and any *I. walleriana* interspecific hybrids are considered susceptible. The downy mildew pathogen can be moved to new areas on infected bedding plants, but once in the landscape the spores can spread long distances to new plantings. The pathogen may also produce oospores that survive the winter between seasons, infecting impatiens planting in the same area the next spring.

**Identification:** The name downy mildew comes from the white "downy" appearance of the spores that are produced in abundance on the undersides of the leaves during humid conditions. This downy growth is diagnostic for the disease and the pathogen is identified by examining the spore structures microscopically. Early symptoms of the disease can be subtle with a slight yellowing and curling of the leaves. As the disease progresses, the plants will appear stunted and drop their leaves. If you suspect that you have the disease, please contact your local county extension office for confirmation.



**Management** should focus on early identification and prevention. Purchase disease-free plants and place plants in areas of the landscape with good air circulation to lower humidity. High humidity and more than 4 hours of leaf wetness encourage disease. Water management is important for preventing disease. Avoid overhead sprinkler irrigation whenever possible and water only as needed. Irrigate only on sunny, dry days and early in the day to encourage rapid drying of the foliage.

If infection is found, remove and destroy (bag and throw away) the infected plants and surrounding apparently healthy plants. Fungicide treatments are not recommended for plants in the landscape and fungicides will not eliminate all disease in an infected bed. After removing infected plants, the beds should be replanted with another type of plant both the same season and the following year. Infected plants left in beds may eventually produce oospores that will perpetuate the disease from year to year. Impatiens downy mildew **will not** infect other species of bedding plants including New Guinea impatiens.

At this time we are tracking the spread and incidence of Impatiens downy mildew in landscapes across the state. Please contact us to confirm the disease. Thanks.

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