Greenhouse Tour

Maryland Greenhouse Growers Association and Univeristy of Maryland Extension organized a greenhouse tour of Tidal Creek Growers in Davidsonville, MD on June 19. Jake VanWingerden, owner, welcomed the group and later on, Mike Leubecker, general manager, gave everyone a tour. Extension specialists covered water management, injector calibration, insect and disease topics. Carrie Engel, Valley View Farms, and Mary Claire Walker, Patuxent Nursery, covered topics which focused on the importance of communication between growers and garden centers, especially in regards to what plant material growers have available and confirming what is being shipped and when. Both Carrie and Mary Claire get a lot of use out of their smartphones!

Karen Rane, Plant Pathologist, focused on downy mildews and noted that infected areas are usually angular and bordered by veins. As fewer people are growing impatiens, she pointed out that growers might start seeing more downy mildew on coleus. With rudbeckia and sunflower, it is the same pathogen that causes downy mildew on both crops; it is systemic in sunflower. Basil is another plant that gets downy mildew. Monitor plants closely because this disease can spread easily. Remember to check fungicide labels because the same materials cannot necessarily be used for herbs, vegetables and ornamentals.

Basil Downy Mildew

By: Yazmin Rivera, Systematics Intern, USDA ARS

Downy mildew on basil has been reported from retail stores in surrounding states this past week. This downy mildew is caused by *Peronospora belbahrii*, and infects only basil. Check plants before purchasing for symptoms of this disease. The characteristic symptoms include yellowing of the leaves between leaf veins and necrosis (browning) in advanced stages. Look for gray, fuzzy sporulation on the underside of leaves coinciding with the yellow areas to help distinguish this disease from nutritional problems.
Tour of Tidal Creek Growers

Mike Leubecker covered different aspects of their growing facility such as the germination chamber they built within their potting area for starting plants from seed, in particular pansies. It is a simple wood structure which gets heat/AC, has insulation, and the humidity is set at 75%. They have their own machine for making Elle pots, and are able to stick about 600 flats (72 plants per flat) per hour. They use lights on their poinsettia crops so they do not need the longer response time cultivars. Houses have ebb and flood systems which is mainly used for poinsettias. Watering with the boom is how many of their spring crops are irrigated.

Mike showed the group the trimmer they use for taking cuttings of woody plants, such as buddleia and hydrangea, and pinching poinsettias. They bought the trimmer for $15,000. Using the trimmer is a two-person operation. The trimmer has significantly reduced the time for pinching poinsettias. So far, he said they have not had any problems with the latex sap clogging the machine. It has a blower which helps keep the latex sap from building up on it. They keep the blades clean with water and zerotol. The blower is also used to send the cuttings into a bag that is on the back as well as push down leaves on small poinsettia plants to expose the growing tip for cutting. Sometimes, Fascination is also used to stretch the tips of compact poinsettias a bit in order to pinch the plants with the trimmer.
Wet Weather Issues: Slugs and Mushrooms
By: Karen Rane
The tropical weather we've had over the past few weeks has been great for slugs! Damage has been severe on typical hosts like hosta (Photo 1), but we've seen damage on unusual plants, like daylily (Photo2). Slugs can create holes or scrape away sections of leaf tissue leaving white or tan streaks. They are active at night, and hide in the mulch or leaf litter during the day. In early morning, you can sometimes see them on the undersides of damaged leaves. For more information on slugs and their control, refer to our Landscape IPM Alert issue for June 14, 2013.

We are also seeing LBM's (little brown mushrooms) popping up in garden mulch (Photo 3). This crop shot up overnight after a day of rain showers. These mushrooms are growing on the organic matter in the mulch and do not harm plants. However, if the garden is accessible to pets or children, it's a good idea to break them up or remove them, just to remove the temptation to eat them.

Publications and Conferences
University of Maryland Extension has publications posted for greenhouses growers. And, check out August conferences on greenhouse biological control (August 6) and stormwater management options (August 20 and 21)