e-GRO Alert

Ornamentals

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Monstera Rust

Colorful leaf lesions accompanied by orange-brown spores are characteristic of monstera rust.

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Beauty or a beast? To the eye of a plant pathologist, rust disease on a monstera might be considered pretty, but growers, landscapers, interiorscapers, and houseplant owners know it as an unwelcome sight.

Rust disease starts as small chlorotic or yellow spots on the leaf surface, which can enlarge and become brown or necrotic over time. These spots can be striking in appearance. In high humidity conditions, orange-brown sporulation occurs on the leaf underside and, in some cases, the leaf surface. In severe cases, leaf drop may occur.

Chlorotic spots on the leaf surface of a monstera, a symptom of rust disease. Photo: Nora Catlin

This rust is caused by the fungus *Pseudocerradoa (=Puccinia) paullula.* In addition to infecting *Monstera deliciosa* (Swiss cheese plant), *P. paullula* has been reported to infect *Monstera* sp., *Epipremnum pinnatum* (centipede tongavine, taro vine, silver vine, dragon-tail plant), *Alocasia* sp. (elephant's ear), and *Amorphophallus paeoniifolius* (elephant foot yam).

Rust spores can spread by wind, water splash by rain or overhead irrigation, the propagation of infected plants, or by movement of spores by such things as hands, pruning tools, animals, or leaf-to-leaf contact.

To help manage this disease, carefully remove and dispose of infected leaves and leaf litter in a way that doesn't spread spores (e.g., bag and remove from the area and avoid handling healthy plants after). Provide conditions that limit leaf wetness, including avoiding overhead irrigation or timing the irrigation so that leaves are not wet for long periods of time. Reducing humidity and providing air circulation with fans and good spacing (avoiding overcrowding) can help as well.

Fungicides can help protect plants from new infections. Rotate fungicides with different modes of action (or fungicide groups/FRAC codes). Numerous fungicides are labeled for rust management; some commonly recommended as effective to use in rotations include: azoxystrobin (e.g., Heritage), mancozeb (e.g., Protect), and Group 3 fungicides such as myclobutanil (e.g., Eagle) and triflumazole (e.g., Terraguard).

As always, pay attention to label restrictions and recommendations. It's always good practice to test a small number of plants first to evaluate for phytotoxicity before treating your whole crop.

Symptoms of rust on the leaf surface of a monstera leaf. Photo: Nora Catlin

Symptoms on the leaf surface and underside of a monstera leaf with rust. Photo: Nora Catlin

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