

SNOW MOLD, PTYCHOGASTER SP.

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Snow mold or potting fiber mold is of concern to orchid growers in many parts of the world, including Florida.



SYMPTOMS

The first sign of snow mold is the white powdery growth on the top of tree fern, fir bark, redwood shavings, and osmunda fiber. As it continues to grow, it invades all or large areas of the potting media and frequently can be found growing out of slits at the base of the pots.

The fungus, *Ptychogaster* sp., is not a parasite but grows saprophytically on the potting media. This leads to poor growth and dying out of orchids when it spreads through the potting fiber. This mold, when active, covers the roots of the plants and may even envelop the base of the plant for several inches. Weakening or death of orchids is probably through suffocation as the roots are deprived of air and moisture (Fig. 1).

CONTROL

Drenching the fiber and base of the plants with Tersan 75 does not fully control this mold. Shield 10% or Consan 20, when used as a drench or dip, has given promising results in recently conducted tests. More than one treatment at two-week intervals may be needed when a high amount of snow mold is present. Repot plants and remove all mold and as much of the fiber as practical. Immerse roots, rhizome, and part of pseudobulb in Shield at the recommended dosage as listed above. Remove from greenhouse all potting materials with mold.

Fig. 1. Snow mold, *Ptychogaster* sp., infesting tree fern media.

Reference

Dodge, B. O., and H. W. Rickett. 1943. Diseases and pests of ornamental plants. The Jacques Cattell Press, Lancaster, Pa. 638 p.