

## *Plant Disease Notes*

# **Gummy Stem Blight of Cucurbits**

**G**ummy stem blight, caused by the fungus *Mycosphaerella melonis*, is a common disease of cantaloupes, watermelons, and cucumbers.

**Symptoms.** The symptoms of gummy stem blight first appear as grayish green circular spots between the veins in the lobes of leaves. Spots turn a dark brown to black with age. The leaf spot stage can be confused with anthracnose; however, gummy stem lesions are darker with targetlike or zonate patterns and less deterioration of the leaf tissue. Spread of the disease begins in the center of the plant and moves outward. Lesions develop first on the vines at the nodes and elongate into water-soaked streaks that become pale brown to gray with time. Stem tissue often cracks and a characteristic gummy ooze is exuded from the wound. Infected vines die eventually, and entire plants die occasionally. The disease, unlike anthracnose, does not attack fruit.

**Persistence and Transmission.**

The fungus overwinters in old cucurbit vines, in seeds, or in weeds in the cucurbit family. Gummy stem blight can appear anytime during the season, but most damage occurs late in the season after the fruit is set. Warm, wet conditions (temperature 75°F or above,

frequent rains, poor drainage) favor rapid development and spread of the disease.

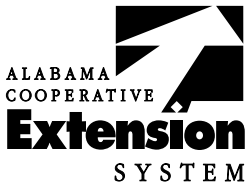
**Control.** Gummy stem blight can be controlled by the following strategies:

- Plant only certified disease-free seeds.
- Plant in well-drained soil free from surface runoff water.
- Follow a weekly spray program with a recommended fungicide beginning at the first true leaf stage. Continue spraying at recommended intervals throughout the season, timing sprays just before rainy periods.
- Practice clean plowdown after harvest or discard all plant debris.
- Plant cucurbits only once every 4 years, and control both cucurbit weeds and volunteer cucurbit plants during this period.

**Recommended Fungicides.**

Fungicides are listed here by active ingredient with examples of brand names in parentheses. (These brands are usually available to commercial growers.) On fungicide labels, the active ingredient is usually listed below the brand name.

Chlorothalonil (Bravo, Equus, Echo); Mancozeb (Manzate 75 DF, Dithane DF, F-45, Manex II); Maneb (Maneb 80, Manex); Thiophanate-methyl (Topsin M).



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Use chemicals only according to the directions on the label. Follow all directions, precautions, and restrictions that are listed.

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Trade names are used only to give specific information. The Alabama Cooperative Extension System does not endorse or guarantee any product and does not recommend one product instead of another that might be similar.

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For more information, call your county Extension office. Look in your telephone directory under your county's name to find the number.

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