Black root rot, caused by the fungus *Thielaviopsis basicola* (also known as *Chalara elegans*), is a widespread and destructive root disease of pansy. In Alabama, the disease is common on both landscape and nursery pansies. The disease can be a problem with other floral crops including cyclamen, hybrid impatiens, poinsettia, and annual vinca. Black root rot is most prevalent when conditions are stressful to the host plant.

**Symptoms.** Pansies infected with black root rot produce aboveground symptoms that are typical of other root rotting diseases and include stunting and/or wilting of plants and yellowing (chlorosis) of the foliage. In early stages of the disease, the roots, which are normally white, develop dark spots or bands. Early symptoms may be more prevalent in secondary feeder roots. Dark-colored spores can be seen on blackened regions of infected roots with the aid of a magnifying glass or microscope. In advanced cases, the root system becomes black and water-soaked. The disease is a problem during all stages of growth and can especially destructive during the late summer months when temperatures are high.

**Persistence And Transmission.** Black root rot fungal spores are known to survive in greenhouses up to 2 months and can also survive in plant debris under benches.

**Control.** A combination of good sanitation, proper plant care, and fungicides can help retard the development of black root rot. Black root rot is best controlled by using the following strategies:

- Use fresh soilless potting mix.
- Use new containers for each planting.
- Keep equipment and planting area clean of old potting media.
- Apply the rate of nitrogen recommended for pansy or other floral crops.
- Avoid fertilizers high in ammonium as a nitrogen source.
- Adjust potting media to a pH between 5.0 and 5.5.

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