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DISEASE NOTE

STEM AND CROWN ROT OF *ASTER ERICOIDES* VAR. *ERICOIDES* CAUSED BY *SCLEROTINIA SCLEROTIORUM*

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In Argentina, *Aster ericoides* var. *ericoides* L. (heath aster), a cut flower crop, is grown in the outskirts of La Plata and Buenos Aires. Death of heath aster plants during flowering was observed since 1997 in commercial greenhouses. Affected plants exhibited stems bleaching and wilting of the leaves, followed by total necrosis. Under humid conditions, cottony white micelium developed on stem surfaces, soon followed by the appearance of black, round or oblong sclerotia, also in the pith cavity. Isolations were made on potato dextrose agar from plants tissues and sclerotia. Typical colonies of *Sclerotinia sclerotiorum* were isolated from plants and sclerotia, sometimes together *Fusarium oxysporum, F. solani* or *Rhizoctonia* sp. Because any of these fungi could cause basal rot, pathogenicity tests were made with two isolates of each of them. Ten 2-month-old potted plants of cvs Suncity (violet flowers), Suncarlo (white), and Suntop (pink) were inoculated by adding rice kernels colonized with each fungal isolate in the soil in contact with the roots and stems. Plants were grown in a greenhouse at 25-32°C except for those inoculated with *S. sclerotiorum*, which were kept in a growth chamber at 18-20°C. Only *S. sclerotiorum* was pathogenic after 8-10 days. The other tested fungi did not cause symptoms after two months. *Sclerotinia* rot has been recorded from *Aster* sp. in the USA (Bolland and Hall, 1994) and *A. pilosus* in Japan (Takeuchi and Horie, 1999). To the best of our knowledge, this seems to be the first record of *S. sclerotiorum* on *A. ericoides* var. *ericoides*.

Boland G.J., Hall R., 1994. Index of plant hosts of *Sclerotinia sclerotiorum*. *Canadian Journal of Plant Pathology* **16**: 93-108.

Takeuchi J., Horie H., 1999. First occurrence of *Sclerotinia* rot in *Aster* and strawflower in Japan. *Annual Report of the Kanto Tosan Plant Protection Society* **46**: 57-59.

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DISEASE NOTE

OCCURRENCE OF *XANTHOMONAS ARBORICOLA* pv. *CORYLINA* IN HAZELNUT ORCHARDS IN SARDINIA AND SICILY

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In the course of field surveys carried out in hazelnut (*Corylus avellana*) orchards of Sardinia [Barbagia di Belvì (Nuoro)] and Sicily [Nebrodi (Messina) and Etna (Catania)] symptoms resembling those incited by *Xanthomonas arboricola* pv. *corylina* Vauterin *et al.* were observed. Brownish, elliptical, water-soaked necrotic spots were present on fruit husks and, sometimes, twigs showed partial die-back. Tissues from lesion margins were ground in a mortar containing physiological sterile saline. Aliquots (0.1 ml) of serial ten-fold dilutions of the homogenate were plated on Yeast extract-dextrose-calcium carbonate agar and incubated at 25-27°C for three days. The resulting circular, mucoid, yellowish colonies were subjected to biochemical and pathogenicity tests, as well as repetitive-sequence PCR and fluorescent AFLP analysis in comparison with the reference strain of *X.a.* pv. *corylina* NCPPB 2896 (National Collection of Plant Pathogenic Bacteria, York, UK). All isolates from Sardinia and Sicily were starch and esculin-positive, had an oxidative glucose metabolism, and grew at 35°C. Genetic fingerprinting showed a strong similarity of the isolates with NCPPB 2896. Pathogenicity tests, made according to Scortichini *et al.* (2002), showed that all tested isolates induced wilting of inoculated hazelnut twigs. Re-isolations yielded the same colony type as in the primary isolations. We conclude that the agent of the disease observed in hazelnut orchards in Sardinia and Sicily is *X. a.* pv. *corylina*. This is the first report of this pathogen in both islands.

Scortichini M., Rossi M.P., Marchesi U., 2002. Genetic, phenotypic and pathogenic diversity of *Xanthomonas arboricola* pv. *corylina* strains, question the representative nature of the type strains. *Plant Pathology* **51**: 374-381.

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