

Sclerotium

Biology

Southern Blight or Sclerotium rot

The causative organism of Southern Blight, *Sclerotium rolfsii* Sacc. (= *Athelia rolfsii*), is a fungus that lives on the ground and does not form spores, similar to *Rhizoctonia*. High temperatures help it to grow quickly, optimal temperatures are between 27°C and 30°C. The fungus needs a lot of oxygen, infestation starts in the upper substrate layers at the root neck or stem base. Roots in the substrate are not infested. Sclerotium can hardly grow in cool, humid substrates.

Damage

The upper roots and the stem base of infested plants start to rot, the rotted areas are mushy and bad, the plants become lurid and dry. A characteristic of the disease is the quick breakdown of the plants. In high humidity, a white to yellowish mycelium shows in the infested areas spreading quickly in a flabelliform way. Later on dark brown round sclerotia form in the mycelium. Sclerotia which are only about 1.0 mm in size are a major characteristic of the disease.

Control

- Fungicide treatment is only possible in the initial phase of the disease. As soon as mycelia and small round sclerotia occur, direct treatment is no longer possible.
- Sclerotia in substrates, pots and transportation boxes can survive for a long time and are easily spread in greenhouses in the water.
- Infested plants should be immediately removed from the stand, because of the high risk of infestation, and destroyed.
- In case of widespread *Sclerotium* infestation in greenhouses, the greenhouses must be thoroughly disinfected and hygiene measures have to be carried out.

Orchids diseases

Sclerotium



Phalaenopsis: Sclerotium rolfisii at young plants



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