Lewis Mite Control; Fall Perennials; Canopy Disease



Cultural and Technical Information for Greenhouse Professionals

GROWERTALKS MAGAZINE greenPROFIT MAGAZINE

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TECH ON DEMAND brought to you by GROWERTALKS

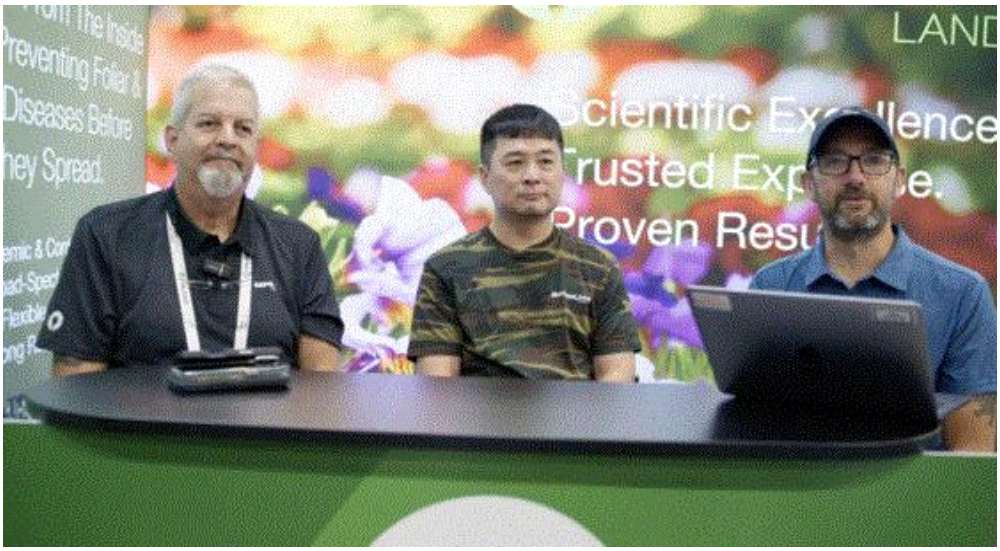
COMING UP THIS WEEK:

SePRO Podcast
Koppert Corner: Lewis Mite
Josh's Tip: Canopy Disease
Ball Seed Customer Days Video
Fall Perennials
Ball For Fall
Finish Line



NEW PODCAST EPISODE: Defend Your Crops!

For the latest Tech on Demand podcast (episode 266), I sat down with JC Chong and Dennis Bunkley from SePRO Land to talk about two of the company's newest crop protection products. BattleLine is a new fungicide effective on a wide range of pathogens and offers long residual activity and flexible application options. Barracuda is a new insecticide with fast knockdown and 21- to 28-day residual activity and is effective on mites at all life stages.



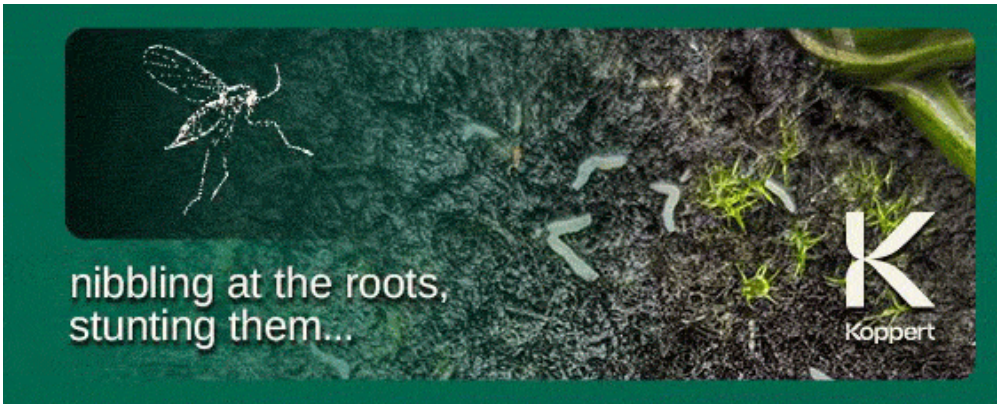
As we sometimes do, this episode is not audio-only—it's also available as a VIDEO.

We recorded this podcast on the tradeshow floor at Cultivate'26. JC and Dennis shared all the details you need to know and talked through trial results and benefits you should expect with

these new products. It was a good mix of science and real-world greenhouse findings.

There are now more than 265 Tech On Demand podcast episodes in the archive, covering a huge range of topics related to the professional greenhouse, garden center, landscape, nursery and CEA markets. Jump back in to get caught up or take a minute to subscribe—that way you'll never miss an episode.

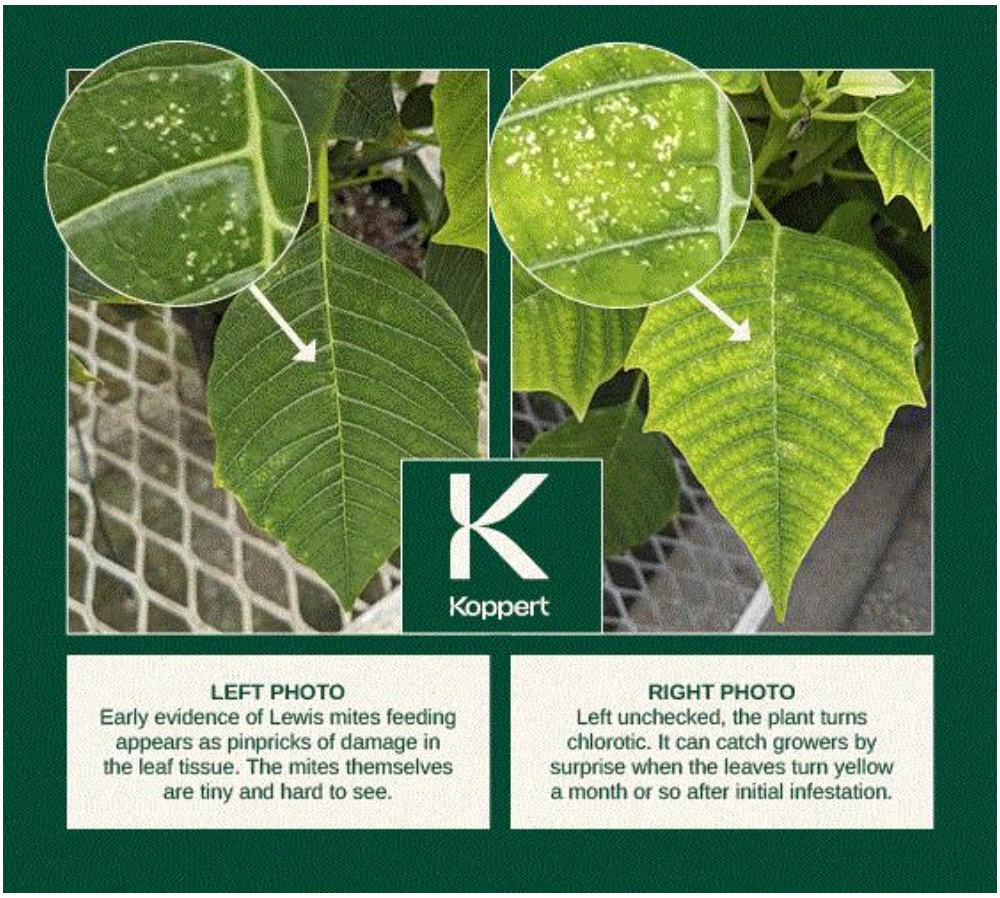
- **APPLE PODCASTS**
- **SPOTIFY**



Koppert Corner: Proactive Lewis Mite Control on Poinsettia

Each month, I connect with my friend Heidi Doering, a technical services expert at Koppert, who shares tips and technical information that she runs across during her many visits to client sites across the nation. This week, she's encouraging you to be proactive about Lewis mite prevention and control.

Lewis mite can create significant issues if small populations aren't caught early in the production cycle. It typically arrives on a small number of poinsettia varieties and is not easily visible on incoming cuttings. In early weeks of production, Lewis mite can reproduce and develop to damaging population levels undetected. Visible symptoms may not show up on the plant until after the crop has been spaced. At this point, the cost to contain this insect pest increases significantly, as now we need to apply predatory mites or spray chemical miticides weekly over a much larger area to gain control.



The Basics
It's best to be proactive and treat all incoming material as if it is infested. We can't know which varieties will show up infested until an astute IPM scout, grower or IPM consultant detects and identifies them in the crop. Thankfully, there are several approaches to eliminating Lewis mite from your poinsettia crop early in the cycle.

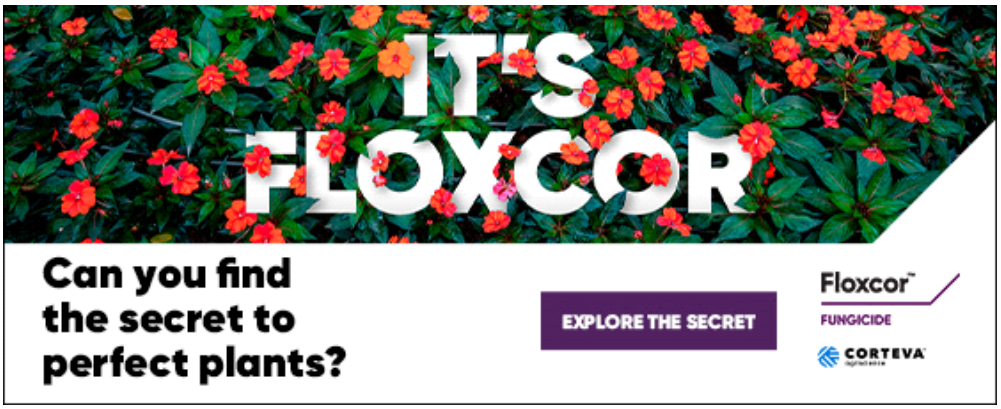
Biologicals/Microbiological Approach
If you don't have time or labor to dip incoming poinsettia cuttings, it's important to initiate an inundative approach to eliminate them as completely as possible while the crop is pot-tight.

Achieve a biological approach by releasing predatory mites *N. californicus* (**Spical**), *P. persimilis* (**Spidex**) and *A. swirskii* (**Swirski-Mite**) *weekly* from the time cuttings come off mist (or liners arrive) until the crop is spaced. In propagation and pot-tight phase, sprench a tank mix of **nematodes** (S*. feltiae* or *S. carpocapsae*) and **Isarid** to impact all stages of fungus gnats and whitefly.

Note that there may be pesticide residues on the cuttings/liners that can damage predatory mites, so ask your supplier for a 12-week history of IPM applications to know what pesticides have been previously applied to cuttings/liners.

Chemical Miticides
The alternative to the biological approach is a series of chemical miticide spray applications. Note that applying contact miticides after the canopy fills out may result in incomplete contact coverage and reduced efficacy of miticide apps. We also don't know what miticides have been applied to these cuttings/liners before you receive them, so we can't know whether the mites could be resistant to pesticides.

Contact a Koppert technical consultant to dial in predatory mite rates and application methods to eliminate Lewis mites before they damages your crop!



Josh’s Tip of the Week: Managing Disease in Humid Canopies

Usually, I work with my buddy Nick Flax, a technical services expert at Ball Seed, to share a concern that’s come up during one of his numerous calls with growers across North America. This week, Nick is following up on a common topic this time of year: challenges that arise when temps go up in summer production. This time, he’s talking disease pressure.

PROBLEM: Environmental conditions in late summer can create significant disease pressure in crops like garden mums and perennials. Warm temperatures, high humidity and frequent irrigation in dense crop canopies provide favorable conditions for fungal and bacterial pathogens. As crops bulk, airflow decreases and foliage remain wet for extended periods deep in the canopy. When these conditions persist overnight, disease pressure builds rapidly, causing crops to decline faster than curative control measures can be implemented.



JOSH'S TIP: Late-season disease management starts with limiting leaf wetness and improving airflow, along with maintaining a consistent, preventative fungicide program with effective application coverage and timing. *Staying proactive is essential for managing disease pressure and limiting crop losses.*

Canopy microclimate: Warm, humid canopies create environments conducive to disease development. As crops mature, airflow decreases and leaves remain wet for longer periods, *especially within the canopy*. Wet foliage going into the night increases disease risk. Improving airflow, reducing overnight humidity when possible and keeping foliage dry going into the night are the most effective ways to limit disease pressure.

Cultural practices: Late irrigation, frequent overhead watering and tight spacing all increase leaf wetness. Lush crops develop dense canopies that trap humidity and limit airflow. Insufficient growth regulation with chemical PGRs and excessive fertilization, particularly with high nitrogen, yields soft growth that is more susceptible to pathogens. While nutrition and PGR decisions are crop-specific, they significantly influence canopy density and subsequent drying time. Managing growth to promote air movement and adjusting irrigation timing can help reduce disease pressure.

Fungicide programs: Fungicide programs perform best *when built around prevention*. Many diseases develop quickly under favorable conditions, and control becomes less consistent once

symptoms are visible and diseases are active in the crop. Rotating between three or more effective FRAC groups helps maintain efficacy and reduces resistance risk. Under high pressure, programs often benefit from including both broad-spectrum and targeted fungicides—provided all applications follow the label.

Application coverage: Dense canopies limit spray penetration, leaving inner and lower foliage unprotected. Contact fungicides remain where applied, while translaminar and systemic products move into or through plant tissues. Inadequate spray or drench volume or incomplete coverage results in reduced control. Increasing application volume and improving application techniques to achieve full canopy coverage are necessary as crops mature. Calibrate sprayers and use water-sensitive paper to ensure uniform spray coverage.

Timing and crop safety: Consistent application intervals are as important as product selection. Long application intervals during high pressure allow diseases to re-establish between applications. Most fungicides are most effective preventatively or shortly after infection, with limited activity once disease is established. Applications made during high heat, bright light or slow drying conditions increase the risk of phytotoxicity, especially on stressed plants, open blooms or tender new growth. Irrigation timing also affects performance, as overhead watering shortly after application can wash off the applied product and reduce the efficacy of contact materials.

Scouting and diagnostics: Effective scouting improves decision making. Early symptoms often begin in the lower canopy where conditions are most favorable. Regular inspection allows growers to respond before diseases spread. Regular crop walks also aid in identifying phytotoxicity, which often appears quickly and in patterns related to spray coverage, while diseases continue to develop over time. Recognizing the difference prevents unnecessary changes to chemistry or application intervals.

For more information, check out these additional resources:

Purdue University: **Fungicide Rotation for Nursery, Greenhouse, and Landscape Professionals**

Purdue University: **Disease Management Strategies for Horticultural Crops**

Michigan State University: **Greenhouse Disease Management 2026**

e-GRO: **Recognizing and Preventing Phytotoxicity**



2026 Ball Seed Customer Days Video (Ft. a New Host)

Ball Seed has hosted a Customer Day event in The Gardens at Ball in West Chicago since 1953, and as far as I know, it's always been the last week in July. And prior to the summer field day event, Ball hosted greenhouse tours and trials as far back as 1936. All this to say that for Ball, welcoming industry members and showcasing beautiful plants and knowledgeable people is not new—in fact I'd consider it part of Ball's DNA. And this year was no different.



What WAS slightly different this year was that Chris Beytes handed me the golden *GrowerTalks* microphone and he manned the camera to record our annual Customer Day video. Why this approach? Because videographer Osvaldo and usual co-host Jen Zurko were making a whole different series of videos that day, showcasing the breeding companies representing products in the gardens and talking to some of the folks who came to visit that day. (I'll shout those out in the newsletter when they're edited and posted).

Click **THIS VIDEO LINK** to explore The Gardens at Ball with me, hear from the folks who know the plants inside and out, and get a taste of what Ball Seed Customer Days is all about. In the video, you'll also learn which new plants are Anna Ball's favorites, how to take advantage of Ball's diagnostics lab, see four new sustainable pots and more.

I also posted tons of photos from the event and some Meta Glasses videos on our social media pages, so be sure to check those out as well. Here are links to our **FACEBOOK** and **INSTAGRAM** profiles.



FYF Perennials for Fall Sales

This video asks the tongue-in-cheek question, "Why should mums get all the glory?"

Darwin Perennials expert Chris Fifo believes that first-year flowering, seed-raised perennials are **PERFECT FOR FALL SALES**. In this video, Chris explained how to produce large perennial containers for fall, grown from plugs, bringing big margins at retail. And producing perennials for fall means you can grow them outdoors with minimal special care needed. He takes you through finishing under natural long days and the specific plant classes that require some bulking. He wraps up with some of his top picks for fall sales.



Be sure to watch our video on **SEED-RAISED FYF PERENNIALS FOR SPRING SALES**, as well, because with fresh breeding coming to market and a variety of plug sizes available from suppliers, a rejuvenation of the seed perennials market is in full swing. These inputs tend to be less expensive than vegetative or more mature plants and they are ideal for high-volume production.

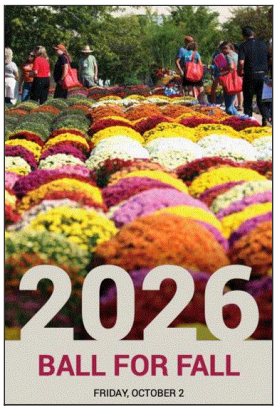
*And bookmark the **FIRST-YEAR FLOWERING SCHEDULING TOOL**. It's one that you can use to hit target dates and make sure your perennial production plans are dialed in.*



Speaking of Fall (and Gardens in West Chicago …)

Last year was the first-ever **Ball For Fall** event held in The Gardens at Ball, and it was so successful that it's happening again in 2026!

Think of it as a Midwest fall trials event, showcasing more than 300 fall varieties—including garden mums, perennials and annuals. Of course, there will be educational sessions presented by experts covering a range of topics, as well as more than 10 Mum Families grown out that you and your team can evaluate for your 2027 program.



And it's not just Ball varieties! You'll see all of the new and top-selling garden mums from Dümmen Orange, Syngenta Flowers and Gediflora, as well.

Mark your calendars for Friday, October 2, from 10 to 2. Please register by Friday, September 25, to secure your spot. You can find all the info you need **HERE**.

Learn more about Ball Mums from *GrowerTalks* Editor Jen Zurko and product manager Jessie McMillin in this **TRENDING NOW VIDEO**.

Finish Line … NICH

Are you familiar with NICH (pronounced nitch)? The **National Initiative for Consumer Horticulture** is an industry organization that promotes the value of plants, gardening and landscapes to consumers. I like to think of NICH as a way our industry can tell its own story to the folks who engage with our products. I have some friends who are involved in NICH leadership and I will vouch for their passion, enthusiasm and authenticity.

One of the cool things about NICH is that the initiative is really collaborative and brings together industry businesses, academics, researchers, other nonprofits and industry groups/associations to encourage more people to engage with gardening and to highlight the environmental, health and community benefits of plants. You can't argue with the importance of this or NICH's mission to grow a healthy world through the art, science and business of plants, gardens and landscapes.

I encourage you to look into NICH and consider ways you might get involved. I'd also recommend watching their video series **WHERE PLANTS COME FROM**.

If you're like me, you have explained our industry's supply chain to friends and family and realized how little folks in the real world actually know about how our products end up on benches at retail. The NICH video series is a good way to help spread the word about how amazing our industry is. And I heard from a little bird that NICH is working on another series for 2026, digging deeper into the topic.

If it's back-to-school time in your house (like it is in mine—a teacher, a junior and a first-time college student), stay strong … I'll talk to you next week.

Please feel free to send your comments, constructive criticism and topic ideas to me at bcalkins@ballhort.com.



Bill Calkins
Editor—*Tech On Demand*

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