A Sampling of Hellebores and Cool Weather Crop Management



News and commentary for the perennial market

GROWERTALKS MAGAZINE greenPROFIT MAGAZINE

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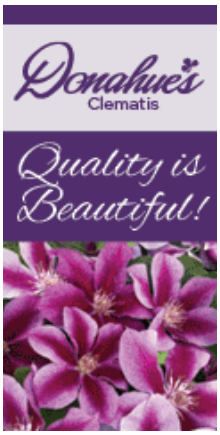
Perennial PULSE

News and commentary on the global perennial plant market

COMING UP THIS WEEK:

What's Happening Here?
A Sampling of Hellebores
Cool Weather Crop Management
The Answer is ...
e-GRO Alerts











What's Happening Here?

Have you ever had flashbacks where you've seen something very familiar, but you didn't actually know what you were looking at? I recently experienced one of these moments while doing some online research when I came across an issue I experienced back in the days when I was a perennial grower.



Image by Jean Williams-Woodward.

The image above is from a crop of hellebores. The problem I'm hopeful you'll solve is the mottling and purplish spotting. Go into detective mode and really take a close look at the image. Do you

see any "patterns" that could be important clues as to what's casing this appearance?

I did manage to figure this out then and I'm hopeful that you'll be able to solve this diagnostic challenge, as well. It's time for me to ask, "What's happening here?" Take a few moments while you read the next couple of articles to consider the possibilities and determine your final answer. Good luck!



A Sampling of Hellebores

I think growers often see cultural issues such as those shown above and assume the plants in the images are prone to issues. Like most plants, hellebores can experience a few cultural issues from time to time, but these problems don't define the beauty or general ease of production these plants typically provide. Let's shift our focus to showcase the many beautiful appearances and options hellebores offer.



Frostkiss Dorothy's Dawn
PP&L



Frostkiss Elemental
PP&L





North Star Ruby Heart
Terra Nova Nurseries





North Star Garnet Frills
Terra Nova Nurseries

Winter Delights Double White With Red Spots
Plant Delights Nursery





Winter Delights Double Bicolor
Plant Delights Nursery



HGC Ice N' Roses Mona Marble
Heuger



Winter Ballet Katie
Heuger



Winter Jewels Golden Lotus
Little Prince of Oregon Nursery



Winter Jewels Sun Flare
Little Price of Oregon Nursery

This is just a very, very small sampling of the great hellebores varieties in the industry. I hope you like what you see and look into adding these beautiful plants into your perennial programs.



Cool Weather Crop Management

I can't speak for the entire country, but here in the Midwest we've experienced some very cool nights, as well as overall cooler, more fall-like temperatures. With temperatures changes and fall growing conditions, growers are presented with new types of problems than they've been accustomed to with warmer growing conditions.

Ball Publishing's *Tech On Demand* newsletter covered this topic in last Friday's edition. Ball Seed Technical Services Specialist Nick Flax put together an eight-minute audio file where he covers numerous fall topics, including dehumidification, irrigation management and disease prevention strategies.



I invite you to sit back and listen to Nick's audio discussion where he offers timely and practical suggestions on how to minimize many potential cultural issues during this transitional time of the year.



The Answer is ...



I showed this image at the top of the newsletter and asked if you could determine the cause of the spotting across the leaf surface. How do you think you did? Before I reveal the answer, it may be helpful if we take a closer look.



All images by Jean Williams-Woodward.

The image on the left is from a different hellebore plant than shown above. It shows a more close up view of the blotchy, dark purplish leaf spotting across most of the upper surface of the leaf. When diagnosing foliar issues, I've often mentioned the importance of looking at the undersides of the leaves; this is what is shown in the image on the right. Can you see it? There are small dots within the discolored regions. These dots are grayish raised sporulation from a plant pathogen.

Since we actually just covered this disease in a recent challenge (think rudbeckia), I'm hoping the penny just dropped. If you answered downy mildew, you are correct.

I really contemplated whether or not to have two downy mildew challenges so close to one another, but then I thought that half of learning is through repetition, and by doing back-to-back downy mildew challenges, I would actually be helping you learn faster and improve your ability to diagnose this if (or when) it occurs on your crops.

e-GRO Alerts

The downy mildew hellebores challenge above was inspired by an e-GRO alert I found while doing some online research. It came directly from the March 2026 edition aptly titled, “Downy mildew on Hellebores.”

This e-GRO alert not only served as inspiration for the diagnostic challenge, but it also contains a great amount of information about downy mildew, its symptoms and disease-management options. At the very least, I recommend you check out the e-GRO Alert – Volume 15 • Number 14 • March 2026 to learn about this disease.

If you like what you see, I encourage you to sign up for your one FREE subscription where you can obtain e-GRO Alerts in your mailbox (e-mail).


e-GRO Alert
Ornamentals
Volume 15 - Number 14 - March 2026

Downy mildew on Hellebores

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2026 Sponsors

Hellebores, also known as Lenten rose (Helleborus species and hybrids), have become increasingly popular due to their early blooming time and the development of new cultivars with a variety of flower and foliage colors. An increase in popularity means there are more plants grown in nurseries, which also means there is a potential for more disease problems.

On a recent nursery visit, I saw hellebores with both foliar nematode and downy mildew symptoms (Figure 1). Foliar nematode (Aphelenchoides fragariae) has been an issue for hellebores and other herbaceous perennials. Foliar nematodes cause angular (vein-delimited) spots on leaves that often range in color from light to dark purple or brown. In Figure 1, the leaf of the hellebore plant in the foreground shows dark purple, angular leaf spotting that is due to foliar nematode infestation. The leaves in the background of Figure 1 show mottling and purplish spotting concentrated on the mid vein. These symptoms were not due to foliar nematode but instead were caused by downy mildew infection. I wrote about foliar nematodes in ornamental plants several years ago, so I am not covering it here. You can find information on foliar nematodes at the e-GRO Alert “Foliar nematode: Angular leaf spots can be confusing to diagnose” (https://www.e-gro.org/pdf/2020_905.pdf). For this current alert, I am concentrating on downy mildew infection of hellebores.

Figure 1. Downy mildew symptoms (upper leaves in image) and foliar nematode symptoms on the bottom leaf. (Image by Jean Williams-Woodward)

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Downy mildew on hellebores, caused by the oomycete pathogen, *Peronospora pulveracea* is not new. It was first reported in California in 2008 (Warfield et al., 2009 [https://doi.org/10.1094/PDIS-93-3-0315C]). However, it was seen and noted in previous years by extension plant pathologists and university plant diagnostic laboratories, including myself in Georgia, for several years prior to this first report.

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My email is paul@pace49.com if you have any comments, article suggestions or if you'd just like to say hello.

Best regards,



Paul Pilon

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