



Question of the Week

Q: The flowers on my beautiful Christmas cactus are dying and are covered with a gray fungal growth. What is it and is my plant going to die?

A: From the description it sounds like your cactus is infected with Botrytis Blight, a fungal disease. Botrytis usually appears on leaves or flowers in contact with the potting medium or in the center of the plant where the humidity stays high. The water-soaked spots enlarge rapidly to encompass a large portion of the plant. When night temperatures are cool, day temperatures warm, and moisture conditions high, the pathogen readily produces spores, covering infected plants with dusty, grayish-green masses.

The best way to control Botrytis on most plants is by frequent inspection and good sanitation. Sanitation includes removing faded or blighted flowers, blighted leaves, or entire plants infected at the base. Avoid wetting foliage, and water early in the day so the above-ground plant parts remain dry. Avoid over-watering, and propagate only by starting a cutting taken above the infected area.

Got questions? UNH Cooperative Extension's Family, Home & Garden Education Center Info Line offers practical help finding answers for your lawn and garden questions. Call toll free at 1-877-398-4769, M-F, 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., or e-mail us at fhgc@ceunh.unh.edu

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