Sclerotinia rot of Cabbages

Recognize the problem
Infections may occur on the stem at the soil line, on the leaves at their bases, or where the foliage comes in contact with the soil; but most infections originate at the top or on the sides of midseason to mature cabbage heads. The infections begin as tan, water-soaked, circular areas, which soon become covered by white, cottony fungal growth, thus also referred to as white mold. The host tissue becomes soft and watery as the disease progresses. The fungus eventually colonizes the entire cabbage head and produces large, black, seed-like structures called sclerotia on the diseased tissue.

Background
The fungus requires considerable moisture for the sclerotia to germinate and for the ascospores to infect plants. It has been observed that white mold is more prevalent in cabbage with restricted air circulation caused by low areas. This is because the poor drainage allows moisture to be retained in the soil and on the plants for a longer period of time. The resulting extended wet period favors the development of white mold.

Management
- Fields with a history of white mold should be planted with non-susceptible crops (e.g. corn, rice, etc.).
- If seedlings are grown in a greenhouse, use new or sterilized flats and soilless mix.
- Locate seedbeds away from production fields and in an area where air movement is good so that foliage dries quickly.
- Provide seedlings with optimal conditions of water, drainage, fertility, temperature, and light for growth.
- Do not irrigate early in the day when dew is present or so late in the day that foliage remains wet overnight.
- Observe field sanitation by thoroughly cleaning equipment used in fields before entering other fields.
- Destroy all crop residue after harvesting
- Spray fungicide when infection is first detected and repeat one or two weeks later after monitoring for recurrence. Spraying after disease caused damage will not be effective.

When using a pesticide, always wear protective clothing and follow the instructions on the product label, such as dosage, timing of application, and pre-harvest interval.

Scientific name(s) > Sclerotinia sclerotiorum

The recommendations in this factsheet are relevant to: Cambodia

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