



Terrill Nell, Ph.D., AAF
Professor Emeritus
University of Florida's Environmental
Horticulture Department

OVERVIEW

Botrytis, or gray mold, is by far the worst thing anyone in the flower industry can open a box and see. It is the kiss of death for the rest of the flowers in the bouquet and probably the rest of the box. This infection plagues the floral industry from grower to retailer, and unfortunately, is irreversible. The good news is there are ways to combat this flower disease as a unified floral industry front. Minimizing the conditions that help *botrytis* germinate requires close attention and committed action from every level of the industry. The keys to winning the battle against *botrytis* include sanitation, consistency in temperature and humidity through the packing and storage phase, and growing *botrytis* resistant varieties for the market.

WHAT IS BOTRYTIS?

Botrytis (pronounced BOW-TRY-TIS) is a mold and one of the most devastating postharvest diseases facing the floral industry as a whole. Small brown spots may be seen on petals or leaves following harvest; if not detected they will lie dormant until the conditions are ideal. Then the spores will start to germinate, grow into the leaves and/or petals, and inject a toxic material that kills the infected area. The damaged area grows and expands and very quickly the flowers deteriorate and are unsellable, mushy, and let's face it, downright disgusting.

***Botrytis* =
Temperature + Humidity**

WHAT TO DO?

Fact: *Botrytis* is irreversible. So, what do we do about it? Prevention is our best line of defense against this disease.

KEY WORDS & PHRASES

Sanitation, Best Cultural Practices, *Botrytis* Resistant Varieties

1. Do not overfertilize – too much fertilizer is directly related to “soft” growth, making flowers more *botrytis* receptive
2. Increase calcium – strengthens the petals and leaves
3. Careful with the water – water enough for good growth and flowering, too much because water creates potential *botrytis* conditions
4. Packing & shipping – apply a postharvest treatment such as Floralife® Shield Liquid Ultimate.
5. Avoid water in the box – remove 30 - 45 minutes from hydration solution prior to packing
6. Pack in the cold – temperature fluctuations contribute to condensation in the box
7. Keep 'em cold – once in the box keep them cold. Avoid temperature fluctuations at all costs
8. Control ethylene – use Ethylbloc™ during shipping
9. Clean & Shine – *botrytis* spores know no bounds. Airborne, they can be found in production cooler walls, tables, cutters, clothing, or debris on the floor. Constant sanitation can really help reduce the risk of *botrytis*. Always use a proper floral cleaner like Floralife® D.C.D.®
10. Always inspect product upon arrival – identify and dispose of any product that clearly is infected.

