

moss, nor is there any warning about the possibility of contracting sporotrichosis.

I have enclosed a paper written by Dr. Paul King, technical director of Sun Gro Horticulture Inc. This paper was written because, over the past several years, articles have appeared in consumer and gardening magazines, confusing the source of fungus sporotrichum schenckii.

Gerry Hood, *President*  
Canadian Sphagnum Peat  
Moss Association  
[See following, ed.]

### Sporotrichosis

The fungal disease Sporotrichosis has been observed for many years, and is often called Rose Gardeners' disease, since thorn pricks are a common way of introducing the fungus. Sporotrichosis is caused by the fungus *Sporotrichum schenckii*, and this fungus has been found in soil, on flowers and shrubs, on wood, timber, forest litter, and various mosses, including sphagnum moss.

Please note that we are specifically talking about sphagnum moss and **not Peat Moss**. Sphagnum moss is a living plant which is green and light tan in color and its usual appearance is in long strands. Peat moss, on the other hand, is medium-to-dark brown material and has aged for thousands of years, usually under water. To our knowledge, there has **not** been any reported cases of Sporotrichosis caused by Canadian Sphagnum peat moss. In recent articles on this subject, published in trade magazines, there has been confusion differentiating sphagnum moss versus **Sphagnum Peat Moss**, and as a result, some of our customers may think that Sporotrichosis is caused by Canadian Sphagnum Peat Moss, which is obviously false.

The fungus is found throughout the United States, but it appears to be most common in the Midwest, especially in Wisconsin. Several

outbreaks in other states have been traced to sphagnum moss shipped from Wisconsin. The state forest tree nurseries in Wisconsin no longer use sphagnum moss for packing seedlings.

No cases of Sporotrichosis have occurred at any of the other nurseries in Wisconsin or Michigan, since they stopped using sphagnum moss as packing material.

Sporotrichosis most often affects gardeners, nursery personnel and tree planters. Workers may contract the fungus from the soil as well as from contaminated moss. The fungus seems to increase in the moistness of most packing sheds. In some cases, the mixture of soil and moss remaining in the shed may have served as a reservoir for the fungus the following year.

Infection occurs when the spores of the fungus are introduced through a small abrasion or a scratch in the skin. In one to four weeks, a small painless blister develops at the entry point. This blister becomes inflamed, and slowly enlarges. Other areas may become infected as the fungus spreads through the lymph channels, and the lymph glands in the armpit or elbow may become enlarged and sore. But diagnosed early, the disease can be effectively treated.

Medical experts recommend that workers in nurseries, and other horticultural areas, practice disease prevention: Sphagnum moss should be stored under dry conditions; and these areas should be disinfected regularly. Workers should wear protective clothing; especially rubber gloves and long-sleeved shirts. Good personal hygiene is essential; hands and arms should be thoroughly washed with soap and water after any exposure. Lacerations and abrasions must receive special attention and prompt treatment. If sores do not heal properly, infected individuals should seek immediate medical attention. □

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## The Prize for Best Article in THE AZALEAN—1992 – Richard T. West

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In 1989, the Board of Governors authorized the editor of THE AZALEAN to establish an annual prize for the best article to appear in THE AZALEAN. The concept was to acquire through donations, a fund which when invested would provide an annual prize for the best article published in THE AZALEAN. Funds were donated by the following chapters to establish the "CHAPTER'S PRIZE":

Tri-State  
Richmond Virginia  
Ben Morrison  
Northern Virginia  
Brookside Gardens

As stated in the September 1990 issue, the best article each year will be selected by a poll of the membership. The prize will be announced and awarded at the Annual Meeting of the Society.

The prize for Best Article in THE AZALEAN for 1992 has been awarded to Richard T. West for his article "Easy Propagation of Azaleas at Home" which appeared in the December 1991 issue of THE AZALEAN. Dick West is a frequent contributor to THE AZALEAN, and the editor and staff wish to express a special thanks to him for his efforts on behalf of the the members of the Azalea Society of America.

The prize for the best article in 1993 will be announced in the next issue of THE AZALEAN. □