

Fungus Products For Nematode Control

HORTICULTURALISTS may occasionally see reference to nematode-pathogenic fungi being used for biological nematode control. For instance, a product being offered in the Phillipines for this purpose is "Biocon®." Why aren't such products being recommended in Florida? We simply have not yet found any that were sufficiently effective and safe. The fungus most widely suggested, *Paecilomyces lilacinus*, is already widely distributed, has provided only mediocre control in any experiments,

and may pose a serious human health risk.

P. lilacinus is common in soils around the world, including Florida. It is one of many fungi that may help suppress nematodes when fresh organic matter is incorporated into soil. However, scientists in Europe and the U.S. have achieved less control than claimed by workers in South America and the Asian Pacific when concentrated fungus preparations were added to soil as a "nematicide." Their successes have been discouragingly small and erratic.

P. lilacinus is unlikely to be dangerous in naturally-occurring concentrations, but there are many reports in the medical literature of its causing serious infections of sinus passages, lungs, skin and eyes. The eye infections, though rare, have been so serious as to require surgical removal of the eye to escape fatal spread of the fungus.

The benefits so far are too few and risks too great; we are still looking. Nematology, Entomology, Pathology News January-February 1988

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