

# Managing *Phytophthora* on Winter Squash and Pumpkin

Dr. Mary K. Hausbeck, Dr. Doug Higgins, and Cheryl Engfehr

December 2021



Vegetables that are susceptible to *Phytophthora capsici* include cucumber, zucchini, summer and winter squash, watermelon, cantaloupe, pumpkin, pepper, eggplant, tomato, and succulent bean. The pathogen may overwinter in the soil and persist for >10 years. *Phytophthora* is favored by rain and warm temperatures and spreads readily via runoff or infested surface water used for irrigation.

## Recognizing *Phytophthora* on WINTER SQUASH and PUMPKIN

- Crown rot at the soil line, wilted vines and plant death
- Dark, water-soaked lesions on fruit and leaves
- White spores on the surface of the fruit that look similar to powdered sugar

The roots, crowns, stems, leaves, and fruits of winter squash and pumpkin are susceptible to *Phytophthora*. Root and crown rot symptoms include browning of tissue and rot. Lesions may appear on the foliage during periods of excessive rain. Acorn and ‘Golden Delicious’ processing squash are highly susceptible to root and crown rot. Spaghetti and butternut squash and some pumpkin cultivars are less susceptible to root and crown rot.

Fruit rot symptoms may appear as white spores that look similar to powdered sugar. Infected fruit eventually rot. It is possible to harvest healthy-looking fruit, but rot develops days later while the crop is in transit or on grocer’s shelves. Squash and pumpkin cultivar types that become more resistant to rot as the fruits mature include butternut and acorn squash and jack-o-lantern pumpkin. Some cultivars that remain susceptible through fruit maturity include ‘Lumina’ pumpkin, ‘Hubba Hubba’ hubbard squash and ‘Golden Delicious’ processing squash.

If you do not have *Phytophthora* in your fields, do everything you can to prevent it from occurring. If there is a history of *Phytophthora* in a field, take preventive measures. Do not plant susceptible crops in the field. Fields must be well-drained and leave low-lying areas of the field unplanted. Irrigate overhead sparsely; drip irrigation is recommended. If *Phytophthora* is recognized in the field, remove the infected plants and surrounding healthy-looking border plants. Clean all equipment used in the field to prevent spread to other areas. Discard culls in an area where crops are not grown. Plant winter squash



White “powdered sugar” *Phytophthora* spores and lesions on fruits of acorn squash (top left), processing squash ‘Golden Delicious’ (top right) and butternut squash (bottom).

and pumpkin into planted into raised beds, allowing excess water to drain away from the susceptible root and crown area.

Apply fungicides early and often. Many cultivars produce large, dense canopies and proper application equipment is usually required to penetrate the canopy. To protect fruits, it is recommended to apply heavy foliar sprays with drop-leg nozzles at the time of initial fruit formation and again two weeks later before fruits reach full size. Rotate fungicides among FRAC groups to prevent the *Phytophthora* from developing resistance.

Remember that the pesticide label is the legal document on pesticide use. Read the label and follow all instructions. The use of a pesticide in a manner not consistent with the label can lead to the injury of crops, humans, animals, and the environment, and can also lead to civil or criminal fines and/or condemnation of the crop. Pesticides are good management tools for the control of pests on crops, but only when they are used in a safe, effective and prudent manner according to the label.

## Management Strategies

- Plant into well-drained, tilled fields
- Use raised beds and drip irrigation
- Avoid using surface water for irrigation
- Irrigate sparingly from a well
- Rotate crops
- Scout fields regularly for *Phytophthora*
- Remove any diseased plants and adjacent healthy plants
- Apply fungicides preventively and at short intervals when needed
- Remove fruits from field as quickly as possible and store in a warm, dry place
- Powerwash equipment after it has been in infested fields
- Do not dump diseased culls in production fields



**Wilted vines and sporulating winter squash fruits.**

This material is based upon work that is supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture (2020-51181-32139) and the Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and Michigan Vegetable Council (SCBG GG21-488).

## Preferred *Phytophthora* Fungicides for WINTER SQUASH and PUMPKIN

Product	A.I.	FRAC*	Comment
Elumin	ethaboxam	22	Rotate between applications. Apply as a soil or foliar spray or via drip.
Orondis Gold	oxathiapiprolin/ mefenoxam	49/4	Apply at-planting in-furrow, as a banded surface spray following transplanting or during seeding, or via drip. If applied via drip on direct-seeded crops delay application until after emergence.
Orondis Ultra	oxathiapiprolin/ mandipropamid	49/40	Rotate to a fungicide with a different FRAC after 2 sequential applications. For disease control, use either soil or foliar applications of oxathiapiprolin products, but not both.
Presidio 4SC	fluopicolide	43	Use in a fungicide tank mix. Apply via drip or as a foliar spray.
Revus 2.08SC	mandipropamid	40	Include surfactant.
**Apron XL	mefenoxam	4	Seed treatment. Wait 6 weeks after transplant to apply mefenoxam products.
**Ridomil Gold SL	mefenoxam	4	Apply as a preplant-incorporated, at-plant soil spray or via drip.
<i>Phytophthora</i> 'B' Team for WINTER SQUASH and PUMPKIN			
Forum 4.18SC	dimethomorph	40	Use in a fungicide tank mix.
Gavel 75DF	mancozeb/ zoxamide	M03/22	Relatively long PHI.
Ranman 400SC	cyazofamid	21	See label about surfactant.
Zampro 4.4SC	ametocradin/ dimethomorph	45/40	Apply via drip or as a foliar spray.

\*The FRAC code is an alphanumeric code assigned by the Fungicide Resistance Action Committee and is based on the mode of action of the active ingredient.

\*\*Preplant incorporation of Ridomil Gold SL is not labeled for *Phytophthora*, it is labeled for control of *Pythium*. Ridomil Gold Bravo SC and Ridomil Gold Copper may be useful in protecting fruits from *Phytophthora* and are labeled as foliar applications for downy mildew control in cucurbits. Fungicide resistance has been detected in *Phytophthora* where mefenoxam has been used frequently.