Pacific Pests, Pathogens & Weeds - Mini Fact Sheet Edition

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Peanut southern blight (011)

Photo 1. Cottony growth of *Athelia rolfsii* at the base of a peanut plant causing leaves to wilt.

Photo 2. Wilt of sweetpotato cutting soon after planting caused by *Athelia rolfsii*.

Photo 3. Cottony growth of *Athelia rolfsii* on a peanut stem, with many light brown mature sclerotia, and others developing.

Photo 4. Roots and base of the stem of capsicum plants attacked and destroyed by southern blight, *Athelia rolfsii*.

Photo 5. Cottony growth of *Athelia rolfsii* on mature vines of sweetpotato.

Photo 6. Roots of *Alocasia* attacked and killed by *Athelia rolfsii* causing the plant to fall over.

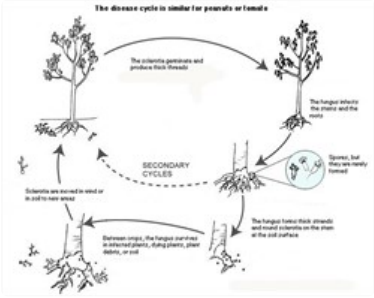

Diagram. Life cycle of *Athelia rolfsii*.

Summary

- Worldwide distribution. On carrot, beans, cucurbits, capsicum, peanut, sweetpotato, taro, giant taro, and other aroids, tomato, and weeds. An important disease.
- The fungus attacks many crops at soil level and below, Its cottony growth penetrates directly or via wounds, causing a wilt. Between crops, it lives on plant debris, or as white, tight balls, called “sclerotia”.
- Spread occurs as the fungus grows through the soil; over longer distance by movement of infected plants.
- Cultural control: crop rotations, using plants that are not susceptible, e.g., banana, yam, cassava, maize; check nursery plants; avoid land with history of blight; add lime or coral sand; remove infected plants with sclerotia; collect and burn trash after harvest; plough land deeply.
- Chemical control: none recommended.

Common Name

Southern blight, Athelia wilt

Scientific Name

Athelia rolfsii, the sexual state of the fungus. It is also known by the asexual state, *Sclerotium rolfsii*. The sexual stage (Diagram) is rarely seen.

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Diagram Southern blight. APSnet Education Center. The American Phytopathological Society. (http://www.apsnet.org/edcenter/intropp/lessons/fungi/Basidiomycetes/Pages/SouthernBlight.aspx). Photo 4 Mani Mua, SPC, Sigatoka Research Station, Fiji.

Produced with support from the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research under project PC/2010/090: *Strengthening integrated crop management research in the Pacific Islands in support of sustainable intensification of high-value crop production*, implemented by the University of Queensland and the Secretariat of the Pacific Community.