

RHIZOCTONIA LEAF BLIGHT OF COLOCASIA

Colocasia belonging to Araceae fam. is a largely cultivated tuberous rooted herb grown as an ornamental plant in homesteads of Kerala. During August-September, 1994, a new leaf blight disease was noticed on *colocasia* (*Alocasia macrorrhiza variegata* Schott.) grown in the garden of Communication Centre, Mannuthy and in many homesteads of Trichur district of Kerala.

The **infected** plants showed lesions measuring 2-3 cm x 0.2-0.4 cm on the leaves. The initial symptoms appeared as water soaked small circular spots surrounded by an yellow halo. These spots later coalesced involving larger area of the leaves causing blighting of the leaves with greyish white centre leading to wet rot of the *tissues*. In some cases, these blighted portion detached from the leaves exhibiting shot hole symptom. These lesions on the leaf spread to the other parts of the leaves just by contact of the affected part.

The causal agent was isolated from the freshly infected leaves and brought into pure culture on potato dextrose agar. The fungus produced fluffy white mycelium at first, later becoming

brown coloured with dark brown sclerotia. Sclerotia irregular in shape, black, closely appressed to the host surface, varying in size from that of a pinhead to that of a pea. The fungus was identified as *Rhizoctonia solani* Kuhn. based on its morphological and cultural characters.

Pathogenicity tests were conducted by placing culture bits and sclerotia on the leaves of healthy plants. After five to six days of inoculation, the fungus produced mycelium highly variable in appearance, composed of colourless hyphae at first, later becoming yellowish and then deep brown coloured sclerotia. Cross inoculation with the isolate under study and that from leaf blight affected ornamental plants yielded positive results. A search on relevant literature indicated that this is the first record of this **pathogen** on this host.

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