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NEW HOSTS OF *SCLEROTIUM ROLFSII* IN SRI LANKA

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Sclerotium rolfsii is one of the most destructive soil-inhabiting fungal pathogen attacking a wide range of hosts in the warmer regions of the world. It generally invades host tissues at the soil level causing collar rot.

Weber[2] listed 189 host species of *Sclerotium rolfsii* from several plant families and Bertus[1] recorded some 25 hosts attacked in Sri Lanka by this pathogen, including several common vegetables and weeds. More hosts, detected at Gannoruwa, can now be added to these lists.

Mango (*Mangifera indica*) and papaw (*Carica papaya*) seedlings were naturally infected under field conditions, typical collar rot symptoms being induced in them. Unthrifty banana (*Musa paradisiaca*) was found to be infected with dense mycelial mats and sclerotia developed on the inner surface of leaf sheaths. Potted plants of *Peperomia* sp. were attacked at soil level.

Of special interest are records of this pathogen on some lower plants. The water fern *Azolla* sp. was attacked under paddy field conditions. Two species of bryophytes, the liverwort *Riccia* sp. and the moss *Zygodon* sp. growing in soil infected with an isolate of *Sclerotium rolfsii* from chilli were parasitised and killed by the pathogen. This appears to be the first report of *Sclerotium rolfsii* in bryophytes.

These observations, while demonstrating the sub-aerial activity of *Sclerotium rolfsii*, also indicate its versatality as a pathogen.

References

1. Bertus, L. S. (1928-32). *Sclerotium rolfsii* Sacc. in Ceylon. *Ann. Royal Botanic Gardens, Peradeniya*, **11**, 173-188.
2. Weber, G. F. (1931). Blight of carrots caused by *Sclerotium rolfsii*, with geographic distribution and host range of the fungus. *Phytopathology*, **21**, 1129-1140.