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## Identifying and Managing in Season White Mold in Soybeans



*Photo by Steve Wilkens, Golden Harvest Agronomist*



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Sclerotinia stem rot, more commonly called “white mold”, is a very common and widespread soybean fungal disease (*Sclerotinia sclerotiorum*). Losses can be extreme depending on the year and the amount of inoculum in the soil. Because white mold symptoms aren’t prevalent until late in the season, it’s important to know the factors that encourage growth and when you’re likely to see it so you can manage it early. White mold can significantly decrease yield and spread to more fields if not managed properly (Know More Grow More).

### DISEASE DEVELOPMENT

White mold infections occur at flowering in sustained wet soil or in high humidity, and information shared by the [Soybean Research and Information Initiative](#) shows white mold thrives in cool temperatures lower than 85° Fahrenheit.

Unless you’re scouting for white mold, foliar symptoms (yellow or brown leaves) will not appear until the fungus has progressed enough to kill the plant. The [University of Wisconsin-Extension](#) encourages growers to examine stems for white mold fungus, beginning as lesions, gray to white in color, at the nodes. The common symptom of this disease is fluffy or cottony, white growth on the stems and eventually dark black sclerotia along the stem or bean pods. As soybeans become dry or die, the stems will seem bleached, or light in color.



## MANAGEMENT & PREVENTION

To get ahead of white mold in your fields, consider scouting your fields early and continue evaluating your soybean fields for damage. If your fields have a history of this disease or you experience prime and consistent environmental conditions for white mold growth, which are cool, wet, and humid weather at flowering, you may need to consider a fungicide application. Timing of your application is critical to be most effective at reducing the impact of white mold, and a fungicide will need to be applied close to the R1 growth stage.

Cultural controls for white mold may offer the best disease management if you experience persistent disease pressure year-to-year. Select management practices that work to reduce the fungal population in your fields, carefully consider plant populations and row spacing in the future, as well as plant a variety with built-in resistance.

Soybean variety selection is critical. Golden Harvest has excellent disease tolerant, high yielding varieties, including the best soybean white mold tolerant varieties on the market. Talk to your Golden Harvest agronomist about which industry leading soybean varieties fit your needs.

## References

University of Wisconsin-Extension; Wisconsin Field Crops Pathology; White Mold of Soybean (Sclerotinia stem rot)  
Crop Protection Network; Soybean Research and Information Initiative CPN-1005; White Mold  
Syngenta – Know More Grow More; <https://knowmoregrowmore.com/>

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Product performance assumes disease presence.

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