

RHODOCOCCUS (LEAFY GALL) DIAGNOSTIC GUIDE

Rhodococcus fascians is a bacterial pathogen that causes leafy gall and spreads primarily through splashing water and the transfer of plant sap. Typical symptoms include excessive proliferation of shoots, leaves and sometimes flower buds—most often appearing at the soil line, but occasionally higher on stems. Severity varies with plant species, the location of symptoms, and environmental conditions. Some plants develop obvious symptoms soon after infection, while others remain symptomless but still harbor and spread the bacteria.

This pathogen affects a broad range of ornamental crops. These images show common symptom expressions on key floriculture species. A list of known susceptible genera, along with links to diagnostic resources, is provided at the end of this document.

Dahlia spp.



Shoot proliferation on *Dahlia* tuber crowns.
Photo credit: Ball Helix Plant Pathology.



Stunted, gall-like shoot proliferation on *Dahlia* crown.
Photo credit: Nathan Jahnke.

Leucanthemum spp.



Excessive shoot proliferation on *Leucanthemum*.
Photo Credit: Jim Kennedy.

***Penstemon* spp.**



Excessive shoot proliferation on *Penstemon*.
Photo Credit: Ball Helix Plant Pathology.



Excessive shoot proliferation on *Penstemon*.
Photo Credit: Ball Helix Plant Pathology.

Phlox paniculata



Stunted, gall-like shoot proliferation on *Phlox* crown.
Photo credit: Ball Helix Plant Pathology.

***Sedum* spp.**



Stunted, gall-like shoot proliferation on stems of *Sedum*.
Photo credit: Ball Helix Plant Pathology.

***Veronica* spp.**



Excessive shoot proliferation below soil level on *Veronica*.
Photo Credit: Jim Kennedy.



Stunted, gall-like shoot proliferation on stems of *Veronica*.
Photo credit: Ball Helix Plant Pathology.

List of common greenhouse genera known to be hosts for *Rhodococcus fascians*.

Common name	Scientific name
Butterfly bush	<i>Buddleia davidii</i>
Bellflower	<i>Campanula</i> spp.
Chrysanthemum	<i>Chrysanthemum</i> spp.
Sedum	<i>Crassula</i> spp.
Dahlia	<i>Dahlia</i> spp.
Larkspur	<i>Delphinium</i> spp.
Pinks, Carnation	<i>Dianthus</i> spp.
Foxglove	<i>Digitalis</i> spp.
Poinsettia	<i>Euphorbia pulcherrima</i>
Wand flower	<i>Guara</i> spp.
False Sunflower	<i>Heliopsis helianthoides</i>
Coral bells	<i>Heuchera</i> spp.
Hosta	<i>Hosta</i> spp.
Daisy	<i>Leucanthemum</i> spp.
Geranium	<i>Pelargonium</i> spp.
Garden, Creeping, Woodland	<i>Phlox</i> spp.
Speedwell	<i>Veronica</i> spp.

Additional References:

[Pscheidt, J.W. and C.M. Ocamb. 2025. Greenhouse Plants, Ornamental-Shoot Proliferation and Leafy Gall. Pacific Northwest Plant Disease Management Handbook.](#)

[Putnam, M. 2014. Demystifying *Rhodococcus fascians*. Growing Knowledge. Oregon State University.](#)

[Putnam, M.L. and M.L. Miller. 2007. *Rhodococcus fascians* in Herbaceous Perennials. *Plant Disease* 91\(9\):1064-1076.](#)

[UMASS. Geranium – *Rhodococcus fascians*.](#)