The most common disease problem that confronts the peony grower in the spring is Botrytis blight. The flower crop may be a complete failure. The fungus Botrytis cinerea blights stems, buds and leaves.

SYMPTOMS: Young stalks in early spring suddenly wilt and fall over. Young buds turn black and dry up. Larger buds, which become infected later, turn brown and become covered with a brown mass of fungus spore; opening flowers may be destroyed. Usually, the stalks below infected buds and flowers are rotted for short distances below the necks. Large, irregular, dark-brown areas may also occur on the leaves. Crown and root rots may occur in severe cases. In wet weather the diseased parts soon become covered with a brown felty coat of fungus spores. Small, black sclerotia are formed on the base of infected stalks and sometimes in other invaded portions of the plants that have fallen on the ground. The causal fungus will overwinter in this sclerotial stage.

CONTROL: Sanitary measures are the most effective means of control. Remove and destroy all infected parts as soon as they appear. In the fall, cut all stalks just below the surface of the ground, removing as much of the stalk as possible without injuring the bud. Refer to Pest Management Guide 7 for information on chemical control.
Trade and brand names are used only for the purpose of information and the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service does not guarantee nor warrant the standard of the product, nor does it imply approval of the product to the exclusion of others which may also be suitable.

KEYS TO PROPER USE OF PESTICIDES

1. Read the label on each pesticide container before each use. Follow instructions to the letter; heed all cautions and warnings, and note precautions about residues.
2. Keep pesticides in the containers in which you bought them. Put them where children or animals cannot get to them, preferably under lock and away from food, feed, seed, or other material that may become harmful if contaminated.
3. Dispose of empty containers in the manner specified on the label.

SEE YOUR DOCTOR IF SYMPTOMS OF ILLNESS OCCUR DURING OR AFTER USE OF PESTICIDES.