

Management of Banana Bunchy Top disease

Recognize the problem

Banana bunchy top disease, known as *Chisaka chanthochi*, is caused by a virus, Banana bunchy top virus. Symptoms of the disease include small and narrow erect leaves which usually have a "bunched" look. In most cases symptoms also include yellow margins, dwarfing and eventual death of the plants. The disease also manifests itself as dark streaks which look like hooks on the petioles of the leaf.

Background

Almost all commercially grown banana varieties are susceptible with some tolerance in cooking bananas like "Magombo" and "Zambia". In very susceptible varieties, like Williams and Dwarf Cavendish, the disease can cause losses of up to 100% within a year. Spread of the disease from plant to plant is by aphids which are usually found in the lower sheath of the plant. Long distance spread is through movement of infected planting materials.

Management

The disease can be managed by:

- Field hygiene – digging out all plants showing symptoms of banana bunchy top
- Use planting material which does not have the disease. Such planting materials can be sourced from agriculture research stations
- Use of pesticides which can kill aphids in the nurseries. Such pesticides include Cypermethrin, Dimethoate, Actellic amongst others. Follow instructions on the label for rates.
- Destroy infected plants by digging out infected mats and burning them or injecting roundup herbicide (as shown in the photograph) or spray with paraquat herbicide
- Do not move any banana plant materials from infested areas to the areas which do not have the disease
- Government should impose quarantine by banning movement of suckers from infected areas to non-infected areas

Top Photo: a banana bunchy top infected banana plant. Photo below: The aphid vector for Banana bunchy top virus. (Photo by Misheck M. Soko)



Top Photo: Piercing a banana pseudo stem in preparation for injecting with a herbicide; Photo below: Injecting Round up, a herbicide for killing the banana plant. (Photo by Misheck M. Soko)



When using a pesticide, always wear protective clothing and follow the instructions on the product label, such as dosage, timing of application, and pre-harvest interval.

Scientific name(s) > *Banana bunchy top virus*

The recommendations in this factsheet are relevant to: Malawi



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