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IPM Strategies for Seedling Production

PEATLESS Project
Practice Abstract No. 2

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The problem

Seedlings are vulnerable to damage from **insects, diseases, weeds and unfavourable growing conditions**. Dense plant spacing, tender tissues and frequent irrigation can promote damping-off, root diseases, fungal infections or pests such as **thrips, aphids and whiteflies**.

The solution

Integrated Pest Management (IPM) combines **prevention, monitoring, and targeted control measures**. Prevention starts with healthy propagation material, clean trays, hygienic growing media and protected storage. Seed treatments as Phytodrip can provide early protection. Good management of **irrigation, drainage, humidity, airflow, nutrition and weeds** helps create less favourable conditions for pests and pathogens. These principles remain equally important when transitioning towards peat alternatives.

Benefits

Regular **crop scouting is essential**. Plants, roots and monitoring tools such as sticky traps should be checked frequently to detect problems early.

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Practical Recommendations

- Pest occurrence, crop stage, and control measures should be recorded, and the cause of any problem should be confirmed before action is taken.
- New plant material should be inspected before entering production areas and separated if suspected of carrying pests or diseases.
- When intervention is required, priority should be given to sanitation, removal of affected plants, exclusion measures, environmental adjustments, and suitable biological controls.
- A well-designed IPM programme reduces crop losses, supports uniform seedling production, limits unnecessary pesticide use, slows resistance development, protects beneficial organisms and improves traceability.

About PEATLESS and this Practice Abstract

This practice abstract was elaborated in the framework of the PEATLESS project, based on the EIP AGRI practice abstract format. © 2023
Project dates: from May 2025 to April 2028.
Goal: To characterise sectorial needs at selected systems towards tailoring PEATLESS alternative substrate blends to overcome identified barriers for peat reduction in horticulture.

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