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SJM 3-18-93 1B

# Chrysanthemum scourge found at 11 Soquel homes

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Crews trying to track down an outbreak of a devastating disease that has ravaged chrysanthemum stock at three Santa Cruz County nurseries have found the fungus on flowers at 11 homes in Soquel.

"The big question," County Agricultural Commissioner David Moeller said Wednesday, "is whether the disease spread from a nursery to the residences or if it was the other way around."

Santa Cruz County, along with the

counties of Santa Clara and Santa Barbara, is under a chrysanthemum quarantine imposed by the state department of food and agriculture. This means operators of the three commercial nurseries where the white rust fungus was found have destroyed their mums, and all nurseries growing the flowers have sprayed to prevent further outbreaks.

Moeller's crews have been going door-to-door in Soquel within a one-mile radius of a nursery where white rust was found. Soon, they'll be checking residential areas near two Pajaro Valley mum

growers who also found white rust fungus on their plants.

The Soquel residences where rust has been spotted on chrysanthemums, Moeller said, are in the Main Street area south of Soquel Drive. He said the discoveries mean that inspection crews will broaden their searches to include all residential neighborhoods within a two-mile radius of the commercial nursery, near the Glen Haven-Cherryvale intersection north of Soquel Drive.

This means, he said, the crews will

range as far as Rodeo Gulch to the west and almost to Cabrillo College on the east and up Old San Jose Road from the village.

Crews checking residential neighborhoods near nurseries where the disease was found in Santa Clara County found no white rust and only two cases in Santa Barbara County — both traceable to a commercial nursery where the fungus had been found.

"But in Soquel," said Moeller, "they found it at the third house they visited.

"How did it get there? Did it spread from the nursery to the homes or from the flower beds to the nursery? We have no idea at all."

Moeller said inspectors will be checking residences for white rust "for as long as it takes."

He described the rust as "white or yellowish-white pustules on the undersides of leaves" and asked that homeowners who find infected mums call his office at (408) 763-8080 and not move the plants.