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Authorities say you should wear a mask.

Many people are unaware that ordinary garden potting mix has been linked with Legionnaire's disease. It's vital to wear a mask when handling potting mix.

For the first time in 56 years Gwen McMinn is on her own. She's mourning the loss of her beloved husband Bill after an innocent gardening mistake cost him his life.

Doctors believe 76-year-old Bill McMinn died after contracting a form of Legionnaire's disease from potting mix. Known as Legionella Longbeacheae, it has claimed 16 lives in the last three years

"It was dreadful, absolutely dreadful to sit there and watch somebody so healthy ... he still looked healthy the day he died," Gwen said. "But there was just no hope and it really got to him."

Along with her mum, daughter Faye watched and waited as her father lay helpless in a coma for three weeks.

At first Bill's condition was a mystery. Doctors suspected pneumonia, but the real answers finally came.

"It was nearly three weeks after that the doctor came running into us and said 'we've just got the results back, it is legionnaires disease from potting mix'," Faye said.

The family admits Bill wasn't wearing a mask while using the potting mix, meaning he inhaled dust particles escaping from the bag. They say many people don't appreciate the severe consequences of using the product too hastily

"He always wore a mask if he sprayed anything," Gwen said. "Sprayed his tomatoes or sprayed his azaleas, always wore a mask but not when he potted those tomatoes."