Sclerotinia Stem Rot Disease Cycle

(Caused by the fungus *Sclerotinia sclerotiorum*)

1 **Sclerotia Overwinter in Soil**
   The stem rot fungus (*Sclerotinia sclerotiorum*) overwinters as sclerotia in the soil or in stubble at the soil surface.

2 **Formation of Apothecia**
   Spore-producing apothecia germinate from sclerotia under moist plant canopy and release ascospores.

3 **Ascospore Distributes on Petals**
   The windborne ascospores adhere to flower petals and other organic material.

4 **Germination and Distribution of Infection**
   Ascospores germinate, infect the petal, and spread to adjacent tissues of healthy leaves and stems by direct contact.

5 **Distribution of Fungal Lesion**
   The lesions progress up and down the stem. At this stage, wilted leaves can be visible.

6 **Formation of New Sclerotia**
   The infected stem becomes bleached and brittle and forms new sclerotia. The sclerotia return to the soil at harvest and the cycle repeats.