

Peach Leaf Curl

Vera Lancaster Master Gardener Ingham County
Gary L. Heilig Horticulture Educator
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Puckered green leaves flushed with red or purple, about a month after bloom, are the first signs of peach leaf curl in peach and nectarines in the Eastern United States. This fungal disease can reduce fruit quality, tree vigor and yield if trees suffer early defoliation, but in most years infections on backyard trees are not very serious.

A common fungal disease, the spores over winter in protected crevices on the bark and around buds. In the spring, long periods of wet rainy weather and temperatures between 50 to 70 degrees F lengthens the time emerging leaves are exposed to the pathogen and can cause widespread infection.

Identifying Characteristics

The puckering of the leaves is caused by cell division and enlargement. The fungus then breaks through the cuticle of infected tissues, causing a powdery-gray dusty appearance. As the disease progresses, the leaves will turn brown and drop. If fruit are involved, they will drop early or can be crooked at the stem and have reddish, wart like deformities.

Management

Although treatments for leaf curl are not effective after infections occur, monitoring should be done for the following year. This disease can be easily controlled by spraying with a fungicide either in the autumn after 90% of the leaves have fallen or in the early spring before the bud swell. Where the leaf curl is severe, maintain the tree vigor by thinning fruit more than usual, irrigating and applying an extra application of nitrogen fertilizer.

Pesticide Options:

Chlorothalonil also called Daconil
Bordeaux mixture
Fixed copper products (will also suppress bacterial diseases)

Timing: Spring before buds swell (April) and repeat in fall after leaf drop.



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