Bacterial Spot

By Deborah Birge, Fort Bend Master Gardener

Q: What's wrong with my peach tree?

Bacterial Spot (bacterium – Xanthomonas campestris pv. pruni): Bacterial spot is first noticed as small, pale green spots on the tips of leaves. Soon they begin to cover the leaf. The inner portion of the spot often falls out giving the leaf a "shot-hole" appearance which is another name for this disease.

Bacterial leaf spot; Photo Credit: Deborah Birge, Fort Bend Master Gardener

Leaves heavily infected with bacterial spot turn yellow and fall. Repeated infection can occur throughout the growing season if there is enough rain. Symptoms first appear on fruit as small, olive brown, circular spots. Spots become slightly darker and depressed as the bacteria develops. Lesions are scattered over the fruit surface and tiny cracks develop in the center of the spots. Leaf infection is more common than fruit infections.

The bacterium overwinters in protected areas such as cracks in the bark, leaf scars that were infected the previous season and fruit mummies left on the ground or in the tree. As temperatures rise over 65 degrees Fahrenheit and budding begins, the bacteria begin to multiply. They are spread from cankers via dripping dew, splashing rain, overhead irrigation, and wind.

Keep your peach trees healthy by properly pruning out any diseased or dead limbs and fertilize and water as necessary. Too much nitrogen can aggravate the disease. Pick up all fallen leaves and remove any spent fruit.

Recommended solution

While there are no completely successful sprays for control of this disease, chemical spray with copper-based bactericide and the antibiotic oxytetracycline have some effect used preventatively. Spraying with a Bordeaux mixture and some formulations of copper are acceptable as an organic solution. Look for products such as Copper Hydroxide, Ziram, Spreptomycin Sulfate. Spray at leaf fall or from November 15 to December 1 before winter rains to protect against twig infections.

Additional information can be found at https://plantdiseasehandbook.tamu.edu/food-crops/fruit-crops/peach-apricot-and-nectarine/