

NEWS RELEASE

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PREVENTING SHOT HOLE DISEASE

BACKYARD HORTICULTURE

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Shot hole disease, also called coryneum blight, can be a serious problem in both landscape and home orchard trees. If we have a long period of wet spring weather next year the disease will thrive under these conditions. While little can be done to control the disease once it has infected trees, now is the time to think about taking steps to prevent it from causing problems next year.

Shot hole disease attacks almonds, apricots, nectarines, peaches, plums and prunes. Ornamental flowering peach and plum trees are often affected as severely as the fruit trees. Most people recognize shot hole in spring, when it causes spots or lesions on buds, leaves, twigs and fruit. The disease can be quite severe following warm, wet winters, and when wet weather is prolonged in spring. However, it's important to think about shot hole in fall, because twig and bud infections of apricot, nectarine and peach can occur during rainy weather any time between fall and spring. The fungus can germinate and infect at temperatures as low as 36°F.

The shot hole fungus overwinters inside infected buds and in twig lesions. The spores produced on lesions can remain alive for several months. They are spread by splashing rain or sprinkler irrigation water, and infect twigs, buds, blossoms or young leaves. Only the current season's growth, or new growth, is susceptible to infection.

You can use both cultural practices and chemicals to control shot hole disease. If you use sprinklers to water your fruit trees, make sure the sprinkler angle is low enough that water does

not get on the foliage. Also, remove and destroy infected twigs, buds, blossoms and fruit as soon as symptoms appear.

Look carefully for twigs and buds with symptoms after leaf fall; infected buds have a varnished appearance. In spring, shot hole first appears as reddish- or purplish-brown spots about 1/10 inch in diameter on new buds, leaves and shoots. The spots expand and their centers turn brown. Often, these spots fall out as leaves expand, leaving "shot holes." Fruit spotting almost always occurs on the upper surface of fruits. Be sure to completely discard infected fruit and prunings. If your trees are not seriously infected, sanitation may be good enough to prevent serious losses the next season. But where shot hole has been a serious problem, it's difficult to find and remove all infected buds and twigs in the fall. In such cases you may need to apply a protectant fungicide in order to prevent the disease. Apply bordeaux or a fixed copper fungicide, available at most nurseries, after leaf fall. It's a good idea to apply the fungicide before mid-December, especially if your trees were seriously infected last spring. This treatment also controls peach leaf curl under average rainfall conditions. Additional treatments may be necessary during very wet spring weather. However, to avoid leaf damage, do not use copper fungicides in spring once leaves begin to appear. As with all pesticides, carefully read and follow all label directions.

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