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APPLE SCAB OF ORNAMENTAL FRUIT TREES

Apple scab is an important leaf and fruit disease on commercial apples and pears grown for fruit production. It is also a problem on ornamental apples, crabapples, pears, hawthorn and other closely related members of the apple family.

Circular lesions appear on the expanding leaves in the spring. The lesions are dark green at first and progressively turn greenish black and then black. As the leaves mature, the necrotic, or dead areas, cause curling and dwarfing in severe infections. Lesions on the leaf may either remain separate or may merge into one large lesion. Developing fruit may also develop lesions, which become thickened, and rough or "scabby". Mature fruit may be distorted or cracked.

Scab diseases are caused by species of fungi. The fungus over winters on fallen dead leaves. During wet weather, during bud break, the fruiting bodies become mature and forcibly discharge spores into the air. These spores then infect the emerging leaves. The fungus grows within the leaf tissue causing a lesion. Secondary spores are produced usually within 2 weeks and these spores then cause new infections on leaves and developing fruit throughout the growing season. The amount of spore production and infection rate is favored by wet cool conditions. Infected leaves and fruit eventually drop to the ground throughout the summer and fall and immature fruiting bodies form that will produce spores for next season's infections.

RECOMMENDATION

Spray 4 applications of a fungicide to control/minimize leaf drop.

Fertilize annually to improve health and restore vigor.

Rake up and dispose of fallen and diseased leaves and fruit.

Prune or thin tree to allow more air circulation within the canopy of the tree.