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Ornamental Cherry: Virus diseases

Use Integrated Pest Management (IPM) for successful plant problem management.

Biology

Mottle leaf is one virus disease of cherries. Symptoms are seen mainly on the leaves, which are puckered and mottled with light green to yellow blotches between the veins. The mottling is less noticeable later in the growing season. Leaves may be smaller than normal and some shothole symptoms may occur. Shoots are rather stunted. The cherry mottle leaf virus can be transmitted by budding or grafting, and occasionally by eriophyid mites. Bitter cherry (*Prunus emarginata*) is a common host of both virus and mites in the wild. Necrotic rusty mottle is also a disease believed to be caused by a virus. Affected trees are slower to leaf out and bloom in the spring. Terminal buds may be killed and the leaf and flower buds open irregularly. About a month after bloom, leaves begin to show angular purplish to brown spots. The spots may dry and drop out, giving leaves a tattered appearance. They can also coalesce and affect most of the leaf. Severely affected leaves develop a yellowish mottling along the veins and often drop. Defoliation can be severe. In the fall, remaining leaves turn mottled yellow and green, dropping prematurely. Decayed areas with gumming may be present on the bark. Twigs, larger branches, and whole trees may die. The necrotic rusty mottle virus is probably spread primarily by grafting with infected wood.

Management Options

Non-Chemical Management

- ~ Plant certified virus-free stock. Do not graft or bud with infected wood.
- ~ Remove and destroy infected trees, if desired.
- ~ Remove wild cherries in the vicinity of domestic cherry plantings.

Select non-chemical management options as your first choice!

Chemical Management

IMPORTANT: Visit Home and Garden Fact Sheets for more information on using pesticides

None recommended

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Images



~ Caption: Cherry mottle leaf virus symptoms
~ Photo by: R.S. Byther



~ Caption: Virus "rat-tail" symptoms
~ Photo by: R.S. Byther



~ Caption: Vein-clearing symptom of virus infection
~ Photo by: R.S. Byther



~ Caption: Necrotic rusty mottle virus symptoms
~ Photo by: R.S. Byther