

Mummy berry

Monilinia vaccinii-corymbosi (fungus)

Mummy berry is an important disease of blueberries throughout the United States and Canada.



Left to right: early, intermediate and late shoot strike symptoms.

Symptoms. The first symptom of shoot blight (shoot strike) is browning along the major leaf veins. Leaves wilt quickly, bending to resemble a shepherd's crook. A light gray powdery layer of spores develops at the leaf base. Flower strikes occur less frequently.



Flower strike with gray spores on pedicel.

Peter Oudemans, Rutgers Univ.

Infected green berries appear healthy but cutting them open reveals a white fungal growth in the locules. When berries start to ripen, infected berries appear pinkish tan and slightly ridged. They feel rubbery and contain a gray to black fungal mass inside. Infected berries eventually become faded, shrivel up, and fall to the ground. After the fruit skin has weathered off, the berries look like tiny black pumpkins.



Disease cycle. The fungus overwinters in the mummified fruit on the ground. In early spring, trumpet-shaped apothecia (3 to 10 mm in diameter) produced on the mummies eject windborne ascospores that infect young shoots and flower clusters. The optimum temperature for formation of apothecia and

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infection is 50 to 57°F (10 to 14°C). At least 12 hours of wetness is required for infection. Frost may increase susceptibility of blueberry shoots to infection. Conidia are produced on blighted shoots and flower clusters and are carried to flowers by wind, rain, and insects (bees). The fungus then colonizes the ovary of the developing fruit through the stigma.

Management. Remove or destroy mummies; cover mummies with soil or mulch – at least 2 inches (5 cm) thick; avoid wet sites or improve drainage; remove escaped or wild blueberries from vicinity; plant resistant cultivars; limit overhead irrigation until petal fall; apply effective fungicides from green tip until petal fall.



Mummified berries with immature (left) and mature apothecia in early spring.

Additional resources:

[Michigan Blueberry Facts: Mummy Berry](#)