Raspberry Diseases in Michigan
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Virus Diseases

Virus diseases are the main cause for losses in raspberry production. They are largely responsible for the decline in Michigan raspberry production from about 14,000 acres in 1950 to less than 1,000 acres in 1980. Certain steps can be taken to minimize virus infection and thereby maintain healthy plants and good production. Following are the most common raspberry diseases. For recommended pesticides, rates and times of application, see Extension Bulletin E-134, Fruit Spraying Calendar.

Raspberry Mosaic Virus

This is the most widespread and damaging raspberry virus. All commonly grown cultivars can be infected by the mosaic virus, except for Canby, which is resistant. Mosaic symptoms consist of light green to dark green or yellow to green mottling of the leaves on infected canes (Fig. 1A); blistering of leaves as well as a mosaic pattern are also evident (Fig. 1B). The plants show a progressive stunting of growth and poor yield. Fruits on infected bushes are small and crumbly. The common raspberry aphid (a rather large, greenish aphid found on shoot tips and on the under-sides of the leaves) spreads the virus from diseased cultivated and wild raspberry plants.

Raspberry Leaf Curl Virus

Leaves on infected canes are rounded, curl downward and are usually of a greasy, dark green color (Fig. 2). Growth is stunted, and fruit production is reduced. A small, yellow-green aphid found on the undersides of leaves spreads this disease.

Tobacco Streak Virus

Tobacco streak virus symptoms are somewhat deformed leaves blotched with yellow areas (Fig. 3) and poor fruit production. Since the virus is pollen-borne, healthy plants can become infected by pollen from a diseased plant.

Tomato Ringspot Virus

This virus is widespread throughout the Michigan fruit growing area. It causes disease in stone fruits (peaches, plums, cherries, etc.), pome fruits (apples, pears, etc.), blueberries and grapes. Symptoms in raspberries are not very strong. A few leaves on infected bushes may show some pale ringspots in the spring, but these later disappear. The main effect is a general stunting of the bush, a general yellowing of leaves (Fig. 4) and production of small, crumbly fruit. Virtually all raspberry varieties are susceptible. Tomato ringspot virus

Figure 1a. Mottling of leaves is a typical symptom of raspberry mosaic virus infection.

Figure 1b. Blistering of leaves as well as mosaic pattern can occur with raspberry mosaic virus.

Figure 2. Leaves are rounded, curl downward and dark green in color with raspberry leaf curl virus infection.

Figure 3. Deformed leaves blotched with yellow are symptoms of tobacco streak virus infection.
Fungal Diseases

**Anthracnose**

Black and purple raspberry varieties are most seriously affected by anthracnose (*Elisio veneta*), but the disease can be economically significant on red varieties also. Symptoms appear on canes, leaves, and sometimes on the fruit. Infected canes show tiny purple spots which progress to light grey round spots about 1/8 inch in diameter. The spots enlarge to about 1/4 inch, have ash-grey centers and may have purple borders (Fig. 5A). As the canes age, the spots appear sunken and the borders raised. Leaves will develop similar small round spots or lesions about 1/16 inch in diameter (Fig. 5B). Diseased tissue frequently drops out leaving a “shot-hole” appearance. If the disease is not controlled, canes become cracked and the drupelets of the berries become infected, resulting in worthless fruit. The fungus survives the winter in infected canes and produces spores (both conidia and ascospores) in the spring at the time of leafing out. The disease can become serious with abundant rain in late spring and early summer, or under sprinkler irrigation.

**Control:** Use disease-free plants. After harvest, cut out and burn old fruiting canes and new canes that show disease symptoms.

**Spur Blight**

Spur blight (*Didymella applanata*), is a serious disease of red raspberry varieties. Infected canes release ascospores and conidia in May and June during rainy periods. Conidia release contin-

![Figure 4. Tomato ringspot virus infection causes plant stunting and general yellowing of leaves.](image)

![Figure 5a. Gray spots with purple borders will occur on canes infected with Anthracnose.](image)

![Figure 5b. Shot-hole appearance of leaves infected with anthracnose.](image)

![Figures 6a. Brownish purple cane lesions of spur blight start at a spur but can extend up or down the cane.](image)

![Figure 5b. Shot-hole appearance of leaves infected with anthracnose.](image)

has a very wide range of hosts, including many weeds such as dandelion, curly dock, plantain and chickweed. The virus is spread by the dagger nematode *Xiphinema americanum* from the roots of diseased raspberry bushes or weeds to the roots of healthy bushes.

**Control:** Purchase and plant only Certified Virus-Tested raspberry stock. Such stocks have been tested for the presence of known virus and other systemic diseases. If planting stocks are not certified, they probably will contain one or more of the viruses described in this publication. Plant stock in soil free of virus-vector nematodes (*Xiphinema americanum*—dagger nematode). If soil is found to contain this or other plant pathogenic nematodes, use a preplant soil fumigant. Locate new plantings 400 yards from other cultivated raspberries which may harbor the virus. Eliminate any wild raspberries (*Rubus spp.*) that are within this distance, using an appropriate herbicide. Use insecticides, such as Diazinon or Malathion, on a regular basis beginning in mid-May and ending after the first killing frost in the autumn. This helps prevent build-up of virus-carrying aphids. Pull out and burn any plants that show virus disease symptoms.
Orange Rust

Orange rust (*Kunkelia nitens*) attacks black and purple raspberries, but not red varieties. Leaf symptoms develop toward the end of June. Infected leaves are small and yellowish with orange pustules of waxy rust spores on the underside of the leaves (Fig. 7). The spores are shed and cause new infections over a 2- to 3-week period. Leaf symptoms disappear from the field by mid- to late summer. The fungus invades all parts of the plant (including the roots).

Control: Never prune during wet weather. To prevent infection, canes should remain dry for at least 3 days after pruning so wounds will callus. Prune out and burn infected canes in the spring.

Late Leaf Rust

Late leaf rust (*Pucciniastrum americanum*) causes disease in red raspberries, usually later in the season. Older (basal) leaves are covered with fine, light-yellow, powdery masses of spores in midsummer (Fig. 8). The spore masses can appear on leaf petioles, shoots, calyces (fruit caps) and even on the fruits. The popularity of the Heritage cultivar of red raspberry has made this disease more prevalent. Rust disease builds up on the leaves of this fall-bearing variety because of the long growing season.

Control: No official control recommendations are available at the present time.

Verticillium Wilt

Verticillium wilt (*Verticillium albo-atrum*) of raspberries is caused by a soil-borne fungus. The fungus penetrates

Control: Plant rust-free raspberries. Remove and burn any plants that show symptoms. Kill nearby wild raspberry plants. Fungicidal control is not effective.

Leaf yellowing and blue stems are the symptoms of Verticillium wilt.
the roots of raspberry plants and moves into the cane through water conducting vessels. It is particularly damaging to black raspberries. Leaves on infected fruiting canes turn yellow, gradually wither and fall. Symptoms begin on lower portions of the canes and continue upward until the canes turn blue and die (Fig. 9).

Control: Use disease-free plants. Avoid planting raspberries for at least three years in soil that has grown tomatoes, potatoes, peppers or eggplants. Remove and burn diseased plants. Use a preplant soil fumigant if the Verticillium fungus is a problem in the area to be planted. To control verticillium wilt disease in new plantings, fumigate in late summer or early autumn (Consult Extension Bulletin E-154, Fruit Spraying Calendar). Apply with a shank applicator (Fig. 10) at a depth of 8 inches, and immediately seal with a drag float or cultipacker. The soil should be in excellent tilth and shouldn’t have had a crop on it for about 6 months before fumigation. Soil temperature should not be below 50° F (at the 8-inch depth) at fumigation time. Do not plant until the spring following late summer or autumn fumigation.

Phytophthora Root Rot

Phytophthora root rot (Phytophthora erythroseptica or cactorum) is of minor importance in Michigan. The fungus lives in the soil and may infect raspberry roots in fields with low-lying, poorly drained areas. Symptoms appear in the summer and consist of either wilting back of entire large canes (Fig. 11) or wilt of only a few terminals.

Control: Plant bushes in sandy, well-drained soils. Install drainage tile or dig drainage ditches where soil is poorly drained. No effective chemical treatment program exists at this time.

Fruit Rots

Botrytis & Penicillium

Botrytis (Botrytis cinerea) or Grey mold symptoms on ripening fruit appear as a grey, fuzzy mold on the fruit surface. Penicillium rot (Penicillium sp.) consists of whitish areas on the surface of ripening fruit. Warm, wet weather favors disease development.

Crown Gall and Cane Gall

The bacteria of crown and cane gall (Agrobacterium spp.) cause galls on roots (Fig. 12) or on canes. Infected bushes become weakened, stunted or unproductive as a result of the gall tissue interfering with water and nutrient flow in the plants. The bacteria can live in the soil for years and infect raspberry plants through root wounds. Infested soil may be splashed higher up on the plant, producing cane galls. Nursery stock may arrive already infected with crown gall which then serve as an inoculum source for uninfested soil.

Control: Check planting stock for suspicious swellings or galls on roots and canes. Dip the stocks in a suspension of Galltrol or other brand of antagonistic Agrobacterium sp. at planting time. This is a nonpathogenic strain of the bacterium that protects the plants against infection by the naturally pathogenic strains that may be in the soil at the planting site. The antagonistic strains act only to protect disease free plants from future infection by the crown gall bacterium; they cannot cure infected plants.

Nematodes

Several species of nematodes cause economic loss in Michigan raspberries. Xiphinema americanum (the dagger nematode) is a root-infecting pathogenic nematode and also acts as a virus vector by spreading tomato ringspot virus. Root knot nematode (Meloidogyne spp.) causes galling symptoms and stunting of plants. The root galls are usually smaller than those caused by crown gall bacteria. Stubby root nematode (Trichodorus spp.) causes a stunting and stubbiness of roots and thereby weakens plants. The ring nematode (Criconemella spp.) is found in high populations in the raspberry root zone, but its importance is not known. The lesion nematode (Pratylenchus spp.) is very damaging because it feeds inside the roots, causing considerable root destruction. Bushes infected with the lesion nematode become very stunted and may die.

Nematodes feeding on raspberry roots cause wounds which allow soil fungi, i.e. Verticillium sp. and Phytophthora sp., to more easily infect the roots.

Control: Plant clean stock. Nursery stock can be a source of nematode infestation. Ask the nursery that sells the stock to provide a copy of nematode soil tests from their growing sites. Before planting, take soil samples as described in MSU Extension Bulletin E-2199, Detecting and Avoiding Nematode Problems.

Fumigate the soil if pathogenic or virus vector nematodes are present.