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Peach Tree

One question continues to come into the office each week and could best be addressed here. “What is this and how do I get rid of it”? Yes, that question could be about anything but it is most often accompanied by a peach leaf.

Peach Leaf Curl is a disease caused by the fungus *Taphrina deformans*. While it is usually harmless for fruit or trees, it does have the potential to affect the yield if it is allowed to grow from year to year. Symptoms are as the name implies, leaves curl, pucker and distort inward, changing color from green to yellow or pale green.

Leaves may have red to purple raised areas where the leaf has become severely distorted. The disease will eventually cause leaves to brown and drop and may prevent fruit development. Fruit can drop early, develop warty growths or have crooked ends, losing their round growth habit.

Chemical control is applied after leaf drop in the fall and again in mid to late winter before bud swell in the spring. Oils are not used but instead try a copper based bordeaux mixture or chlorothalonil for control. Copper fungicides should have at least 50% copper in order to be effective. Now is not the time for control. The symptoms (curl) can be seen on the leaves now. If you have it, mark a date on your calendar as a reminder to apply control in the fall and winter.

If leaf curl is present then concentrate on preventing stress on your tree. As the leaves fall due to the disease, the tree will be less able to produce energy. Water trees when the weather calls for it and apply nitrogen for new growth. If your tree has not been pruned you may want to consider removing smaller limbs. Thin the fruit to prevent an overabundance of small fruit.

The University Of Missouri provides information and timing for homeowners who have fruit and wish to spray to control disease and insects. The publication is called “Fruit Spray Schedules for the Homeowner”. This guide sheet can be obtained from any extension office or downloaded from <http://extension.missouri.edu/publications/DisplayPub.aspx?P=G6010>.

Fruit Spray Schedules for the Homeowner. Bruce Barrett, Michele Warmund and Patrick Byers.
Extension Guide Sheet G6010. University of Missouri. Rev October 2008.

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