

ATTRA Identification Sheet

Cherry Diseases



NATIONAL CENTER
FOR APPROPRIATE
TECHNOLOGY

There are several key diseases that affect cherry production. Use this handy guide to help identify some diseases and to learn more about causes and solutions. For more specific information about these diseases, or to learn about cherry diseases not addressed here, see ATTRA's *Cherries: Organic Production* publication.

— Symptoms —

Bacterial Canker

- Bacterial canker (causal organism *Pseudomonas syringae*) infects young trees at a higher rate than older trees. Symptoms include sunken, darker-than-normal bark, often around pruning wounds or cracks from winter injury.
- Every part of the tree can be affected: leaf, fruit, twig, branch, trunk, and root.
- Gummy, amber-colored exudates are common at infection sites. As the disease progresses, cankers expand and cracks appear. Leaves on shoots near the infection site turn yellow and droop.
- Cutting into the cambium in the suspected area will reveal orange-brown streaks extending into adjacent white, healthy wood.



Photo: Jay W. Pscheidt

Black Knot

- Black knot (causal organism *Apiosporina morbosum*), is a fungal disease that produces distorted, gall-like growths on branches.
- Infection sites are on new growth, usually at the base of the leaf petiole or on a fruit spur.



Photo: Bugwood.org

Phytophthora Root Rot

- Phytophthora root rot can be a serious obstacle wherever the soil remains saturated or very wet for any appreciable period of time.
- The main symptom is often an indistinct unhealthiness or lack of vigor.
- If phytophthora is suspected, diagnose by pulling back the soil from around the crown and shallow roots and, using a knife to cut away the bark, looking for a reddish-brown discoloration of the cambium.



Photo: Melodie Putnam, OSU Plant Clinic

Brown Rot

- Brown rot (causal organisms *Monilinia fructicola* and *M. laxa*) is foremost among fungal diseases of stone fruit, infesting blossoms, twigs, and fruit in all stages.
- Two to three weeks before harvest, earlier infection of the fruit becomes apparent as the fruit softens approaching ripeness, causing rot both at harvest and in storage.
- Often occurs in warm, humid climates.
- More prevalent in the eastern United States than in the West.
- Blossom blight during bloom is an indicator for extensive brown rot later in the season.



Photo: Erin Lizotte

Powdery Mildew

- Powdery mildew (causal organism *Podosphaera clandestine*) attacks leaves and twigs, producing whitish, felt-like patches on leaves and young twigs and distorting the leaves.
- Trees can become severely stunted and defoliation is possible.



Photo: utahpests.usu.edu

