



April 8, 2009

### Info on redbtip photinia leaf spot

Photinia leaf spot is caused by the fungus *Entomosporium mespili*, a widespread and damaging disease on the popular ornamental shrub, redbtip photinia. Indian hawthorn and some pear cultivars also are susceptible. During cool, wet weather and when active plant growth is occurring is when the disease is most likely to occur.

The first symptoms of photinia leaf spot are tiny, circular, bright-red spots on upper and lower leaf surfaces. Spots may coalesce into large purple blotches. Mature leaf spots develop a gray center. Black specks within the spot represent the spore-producing bodies of the fungus. The leaf spot will have a distinctive dark red-to-purple margin. Spots also develop on leaf petioles and stem tissues during cool, wet periods, when the fungus is most active. Extensive leaf drop from severe infections can lead to eventual plant death.

The fungus overwinters in infected leaves and shoots from the previous year. Masses of spores are produced and released from the spots late winter through spring. Fungal spores mainly are spread by splashing water. New leaf spots may appear 10-14 days after infection during warm, wet conditions in the spring.

The reddish new flush of leaves is the most susceptible. Infections often start at the bottom portions of the plant and move upwards during cool, rainy periods. Practices that encourage a flush of succulent growth, such as summer pruning, frequent pruning and fertilization, often favor disease development.

There are no resistant selections of redbtip photinia to photinia leaf spot. Chinese and Japanese photinia tend to be less susceptible. Levels of resistance are available in Indian hawthorn cultivars.

Purchase only plants with no leaf symptoms. Provide adequate spacing between plants and avoid overhead irrigation to minimize leaf wetness. Remove and destroy fallen diseased leaves. Avoid over fertilization and

watering, which may stimulate lush growth, and reduce pruning during the summer. It may be necessary to remove severely infected plants and replace with a less susceptible species.

Plants with a history of leaf spot may require protectant fungicidal sprays in early spring. Routine preventative fungicide applications may be required to maintain healthy specimens. Fungicide choices include those with the active ingredients myclobutanil, propiconazole, triforine, triadimefon and chlorothalonil. Multiple applications may be necessary, beginning at bud break until all new foliage is matured.

Fungicide sprays in combination with sanitation are necessary.

For information on ornamental diseases, call University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension office at 425-2335.

*Mark Keaton is staff chair for Baxter County at UA Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service.*