Peach Leaf Curl

Peach Leaf Curl is a serious fungal disease caused by the fungus *Taphrina deformans and is not* only found on peaches but also on nectarines, almonds and very occasionally apricots. It is a troublesome disease in the U.K. climate but one that can be avoided.

DAMAGE

Peach Leaf Curl is first noticed early in the spring soon after the leaves unfold. The leaf-blade becomes puckered and curled downwards and is often severely distorted. At first, leaves are pale green or yellowish, but later large reddish blisters develop. Usually the whole of a leaf is affected, but sometimes only part of it shows blistering.

The upper surface of affected leaves become covered with a whitish bloom as the fungus begins to produce its spores. The affected leaves are finally killed and fall early, resulting in severe defoliation, but often new leaves develop towards the end of the season. The vigour of the tree is consequently impaired and the crop suffers in quality and amount. The fungus over-winters in the bark and between the bud scales, not on fallen leaves.

CONTROL

Non Chemical Control

When the attack is slight, all infected shoots or leaves should be removed and burned as soon as the disease is identified, preferably before the spore layer develops. This will minimise the risk of infection the following season. Keep the tree well watered and fed to encourage the development of new replacement growth.

For fan trained trees, a clear polythene cover with the sides open and a gap of 30cm (1ft) at the bottom for ventilation, put on in December and removed in mid-May should prevent Peach Leaf Curl. The polythene will exclude the rain, thereby denying the moisture the Peach Leaf Curl spores need to germinate. The extra warmth will also protect the blossom from being damaged by frost as well as improving fruit set. Ideally the polythene needs to be supported on a timber framework.

Chemical Control

There are no fungicides available to gardeners for the control of peach leaf curl.