

Raspberry Cane Blight



Cane Blight is a serious fungal disease which affects raspberry canes. The fungus infects young canes through wounds which are initially caused by raspberry cane midge attack, late spring frosts or pruning. The disease may be serious enough to kill the young canes and consequently reduce fruiting potential for the following year.

Cane midges emerge in early May or later, depending on spring temperatures (in Scotland they tend to appear about a month later). They lay eggs in splits on young raspberry canes, usually when they have reached a height of 20-30cm. Eggs hatch within a week and the larvae feed under the outer layer of young canes. The larvae are approximately 3mm long and salmon pink to yellowish. Direct injury is slight, but the damaged tissue is left susceptible to Cane Blight.

DAMAGE:

The fungus causing Cane Blight (*Leptosphaeria coniothyrium*) is carried by rain and infects canes when it splashes on to open wounds. A dark area can be seen on the canes just above ground level. Canes become brown

and the bark starts to rupture. The shoots or the whole cane start to die back over the summer. Infected canes become very brittle and may snap off just above ground level. Tiny, black fungal fruiting bodies develop on dead areas and exude spores which are forcibly ejected into the air.

CONTROL

It is important to minimise the amount of infection, so careful pruning and training to prevent unnecessary damage is essential.

Avoid planting canes in poor soil conditions, such as in areas prone to waterlogging as this will weaken the plants making them more susceptible to attack. It is also important not to plant new raspberry canes (or strawberries) in an old raspberry bed without first changing the soil as the fungus can survive in the ground for some time on buried raspberry wood.

Non Chemical Control

Prune out infected canes. The canes should not be broken off or infected portions will be left behind. After each cut the knife should be wiped with a rag soaked in strong disinfectant.

Canes should be well spaced allowing sunlight and air to penetrate and dry out plant surfaces quickly.

Improve drainage on heavy soils and mulch around canes to prevent soil drying out during hot periods to reduce any plant stress.

Chemical Control

There are no fungicides available to the home gardener for treatment of this condition.

USE CHEMICALS SAFELY: ALWAYS READ THE LABEL

When using chemicals it is most important to follow the manufacturer's instructions precisely. Only use on the fruits that are listed on the manufacturer's label. An accurate weighing machine and measuring cylinder should be obtained. Chemicals can be wasted by making concentrations unnecessarily strong or by making them too weak and ineffective. Furthermore, if chemicals are too strong they may cause damage to the foliage.