

Rust

Rust diseases affect currants, gooseberries, blackberries, raspberries and plum trees.



DAMAGE:

Rust diseases are easily recognised in their early stages by the bright orange coloured spots produced on the leaves from late spring onwards. Later the spots on the underside of the leaves turn into dark brown pustules and appear to be woolly or coarsely hairy.

On raspberries and blackberries it can cause premature leaf drop and reduction of vigour. The spots on the upper surfaces of leaves on blackberries differ in colour, being dark red or purple. On both these fruits the fungus over-winters on the leaves and in the spring secondary spores are produced which infect the young leaves. Mild temperatures and high humidity encourage infection.

Certain rusts have alternate hosts and although unrelated, both plants are needed for the fungus to complete its life cycle. The disease on currants is always worst in the vicinity of the Weymouth pine and other five-needled pines. This is because the currant rust fungus passes one stage of its life's history on to these species which in turn produces spores which re-infect currant bushes. In severe cases, the disease causes the defoliation of currants.

The disease on plums is worst in the vicinity of anemones. When plum leaves are severely infected they turn yellow and fall prematurely. Such defoliation tends to weaken the tree, but as infection is confined to the leaf and does not affect the fruit, the tree will not be permanently damaged.

CONTROL:

Non Chemical Control

If the symptoms are not too severe, Rust can be controlled by picking off and burning infected leaves as soon as they are seen. Care must be taken not to remove large numbers of leaves as this can do more harm than good. Fallen leaves should also be raked up and burned. Care must also be taken to avoid using too much nitrogen rich fertiliser as this results in an abundance of soft new growth which is more susceptible to rust.

Chemical Control

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