

## *Plant Disease Notes*

# **Anthracnose of Strawberries**

**ANR-934**

Anthracnose is the term used to identify strawberry diseases caused by the fungus *Colletotrichum*. Anthracnose fungi may attack the plant's crowns, petioles, leaves, stolons, flowers, buds, and fruit. The term **anthracnose** can apply to all phases of the disease but is often reserved for lesions found on stolons and petioles. Other phases are usually described by symptoms, for example, crown or fruit rot.

**Symptoms.** Anthracnose lesions on stolons and petioles are usually sunken, firm, dark, and dry with a sharp line separating healthy from diseased tissue. When a runner is girdled by a lesion, the daughter plants beyond the lesion wilt and die. Lesions on petioles also result in the death of leaves.

Crown rot occurs when the fungus grows into crowns from infected runners or petioles. Plants with crown rot may die in the nursery or after being transferred to production fields. Wilting plants with crown rot have a reddish brown, firm rot in the interior of the crown. This can be seen most easily by cutting through the crown lengthwise. Crown rot is sometimes difficult to identify just on the basis of crown discoloration because crowns of dying strawberry plants turn brown regardless of what kills them.

Fruit rot can occur on both ripe and unripe fruit. Infected tissue on ripening fruit appears as round, firm, sunken, tan to brown spots that turn into sunken black lesions with age. The spots may remain a light tan color for a few days, especially during wet weather. The entire fruit may become infected, dried, and mummified. Dark brown to black, firm lesions can occur on the green fruit of susceptible cultivars.

**Persistence and Transmission.** Sources of anthracnose are difficult to determine. The fungus can survive for several months in the soil or on plant debris. Anthracnose may also survive on alternate hosts during the summer. Infected transplant material can act as the primary source of the disease. Anthracnose is favored by warm to hot, wet conditions with high relative humidity.

**Control.** Anthracnose of strawberries can be controlled by the following strategies:

- Transplant disease-free material.
- Follow a protective fungicide program from transplanting through harvest.
- Avoid overhead irrigation if possible.

- If fruit rot occurs, remove all infected fruit at each harvest.
- To prevent the spread of the disease, never move pickers from an infected to a noninfected field.

- When they are available, plant strawberry varieties resistant to anthracnose (Resistant varieties are currently being developed).



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Use chemicals only according to the directions on the label. Follow all directions, precautions, and restrictions that are listed.

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**For more information**, call your county Extension office. Look in your telephone directory under your county's name to find the number.

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