

Flyspeck on Apples

Flyspeck, caused by the fungus *Schizothyrium pomi*, is one of the most common diseases of apples in the Southeast. Without fungicidal control, the disease will occur on 100 percent of the fruit produced and probably cause more losses than any other disease. The disease affects all cultivars of apple. The fungus only grows on the surface of the fruit, causing cosmetic damage, and is usually found with the fungal disease sooty blotch.

Symptoms. Symptoms of flyspeck are appropriately described by the name of the disease. Colonies have up to 50 small, shiny, black fungal fruiting structures grouped in an irregular to circular pattern on the fruit surface. Multiple colonies are typically located on an infected fruit.

Persistence and Transmission. The fungus that causes flyspeck overwinters on apple twigs and other perennial hosts. The initial infection occurs from airborne fungal spores that

are produced for about two months beginning around bloom. Symptoms first appear on the fruit about 3 to 6 weeks after infection. Secondary spread from infected fruit occurs throughout the summer. The optimum temperature for fruit infection is about 65 degrees F though infection can occur at temperatures up to 82 degrees F.

Control. Control of flyspeck is achieved through dormant and summer pruning and tree training that open trees and facilitate drying of the fruit surface and allow for uniform fungicide deposition on the fruit. Fungicides need to be applied on a preventative basis beginning at second cover and continuing at 10- to 14-day intervals until harvest. See Extension publication ANR-500-A, *Alabama Pest Management Handbook, Volume 1*, for a list of recommended fungicides and spray schedules.



Your Experts for Life

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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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