

CEDAR APPLE RUST AND APPLE SCAB

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Release: April 4, 2022

Fruit trees will soon bud out. If a tree had a fungal leaf disease last season, and it resulted in severe and early leaf loss, spring is an important time to apply fungicides if that is the control choice.

Apples and crabapples are often infected by apple scab and cedar apple rust. Both cause spots to develop on leaves followed by leaf yellowing and dropping throughout the season.

Neither disease will kill a tree in one or even many seasons of infection, but can reduce yields. For this reason, and because fungicides work best when applied just before and during the infection period, spring is the time to treat trees that were diseased last season.

After a tree is infected, most fungicides do very little for control. When leaf samples are brought to me in July and August, I recommend homeowners clean up and destroy fallen leaves but wait until the following spring to apply a fungicide.

If an apple or crabapple tree was infected last season, and the infection resulted in over 50 percent of the leaves dropping by July or early August, a fungicide applied this spring will help reduce infections for this year.

There are resistant apple and crabapple cultivars. These trees rarely need to be treated with fungicides. If leaf symptoms and heavy leaf drop has never occurred on an apple or crabapple, the tree is likely resistant and fungicides are not needed.

For susceptible trees, fungicide treatment during the spring following an infection year will help reduce new infections. But timing is everything when it comes to using a pesticide to control pests.

The fungi that cause these diseases release spores and infect plants mainly in April and May, especially during rainy periods. This is when a fungicide will be most effective. Again, after leaf spots have developed, it is too late for fungicides to work well.

Just as tree buds begin to swell and green leaf tissue is showing is the time to begin applying a labeled fungicide. Repeat application two to three times according to label direction, typically every 7 to 10 days if wet weather persists.

The fungicide myclobutanil (Immunox) is available to homeowners and is effective in controlling apple scab and cedar apple rust. Note there are several formulations of Immunox but only one is labeled for fruit. Other fungicides labeled for use on fruit trees are effective as well.

It is the law that the plant or site a pesticide is being applied to must be listed on the label. If not, it is not legal or safe to use the product for that purpose.

Before treating any plant, especially edible plants, check the label. If an edible, also check the label for the recommended waiting period between treating the plant and harvesting and eating the fruit.

If an apple tree also needs protection from insects like apple codling moth, an insecticide can be added or a multipurpose product used. Always wait until after blooming is finished and all petals have dropped off to apply insecticides to avoid harming bees.