



Stone Fruit IPM for Beginners

Developed by the Great Lakes Fruit Workers and funded by a working group grant from the North Central Integrated Pest Management Center





Chapter 17

Scab in peaches, nectarines and apricots

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Scab

Fusicladium carpophilum

Hosts 🌛

Peach, nectarine and apricot.

Time of concern

From shuck split to 1 month before harvest.

Symptoms and damage

Scab is a significant disease on peaches and nectarines, but generally of minor concern on plums and apricots. Slightly raised, circular lesions from 3 to 7 millimeters in diameter on new green twigs appear in spring to early summer. Twig lesion color progresses from green to reddish brown and eventually dark brown, usually more conspicuous the year following infection. Leaf symptoms are most common on the underside, are less conspicuous than twig and fruit spots but also start as small, greenish spots, becoming dark greenish brown or black.

The most obvious symptoms are fruit spots starting as small, circular, velvety-green and brown lesions that darken to dark green and reach 2-3 millimeters in diameter, sometimes with a yellowish halo. Halos are more common on blush (red) areas of the fruit. Fruit spots tend to be clustered on the upper, usually stem end, and may cause skin cracking as fruit expand.

Fruit with spots and skin cracks tend to have less shelf life and are more prone to fruit rots. Scab lesions on fruit can be confused with bacterial spot, however bacterial spot lesions tend to be more pitted than scab lesions, which tend to be more superficial.

Pest cycle

Scab survives winter months as mycelia (fungal strands) in twig lesions and thick walled fungal strands (chlamydospores) on bark. Spores produced in the lesions in spring and early summer are splashed and blown to new twig growth and fruit.



Peach scab lesions are fuzzy, circular, olive-brown and generally do not indent or pit the skin and flesh like bacterial spot.



Although twig infection can occur before bloom in peaches, most twig growth and infection occurs approximately two weeks after shuck split. Fruit are not susceptible until they emerge from the shuck and there is some evidence that fruit become more susceptible as they lose hair. Symptom expression following infection is slow, requiring 25 or more days for twigs and leaves, and at least 40 days for fruit.

Infected twigs provide spores for infection during the following year, but generally no longer.

41

Monitoring weather and preventing infection

Spore production and infection are favored by high relative humidity, rain and mist, and temperatures in the 60 to 85 degrees Fahrenheit range.

All peaches and nectarines are susceptible to scab, although some varieties are somewhat more susceptible than others. Manage scab by using effective fungicides beginning about shuck split when fruit are exposed to scab spores. At this time, new twigs are large enough to be a significant target, and spore production by overwintering twigs is at the peak.

Routine fungicides used for brown rot management are generally sufficient for scab control, with the exception of DMI fungicides such as Indar and Quash. Scab can get established in orchards where spray coverage has been poor, requiring more diligence next year to protect fruit and new twig growth.

Presumably, fewer applications for scab are needed in dry years. However, forecasts are not accurate enough to guide fungicide sprays, and fungicides for scab are generally protectants and require application before infection takes place.

IPM steps for beginners

- ► Provide effective fungicide coverage for approximately four weeks following shuck split to prevent scab lesions on fruit and establishment of scab twig cankers.
- ► The most critical sprays are those at shuck split and approximately 10 days later. Infections occurring within four weeks of harvest generally do not result in visible lesions.
- ► Monitor for scab symptoms on twigs and fruit to gauge the effectiveness of spray programs and the need for better fungicide coverage.
- ▶ Prune to promote air movement to discourage fungal activity and good spray penetration for fungicide applications.
- ► Refer to Michigan State University's current "Fruit Management Guide" for suggested fungicide options relative to growth stage; read and make applications in accordance with fungicide labels.



An apricot with scab.