

Algal stem blotch

Cephaleuros virescens (plant-parasitic alga)

This disease is known to occur in Florida.

Symptoms. Initial symptoms on green stems are small reddish blotches that expand and may eventually girdle canes. Under humid conditions, the lesions support green to orange tufts or mats of algal growth.



Young, red lesions on canes.

Older lesions with gray centers.



Other symptoms are stunted canes with pale yellow leaves. Cane death may also occur, but it is unclear whether this is a direct symptom or caused by secondary invaders such as *Botryosphaeria* spp. The cultivar Misty is particularly susceptible.

Disease cycle. The pathogen has a wide host range and is prevalent in very hot, humid environments. While little is known about this pathogen on blueberries, based on reports on other hosts, it mainly colonizes the cane epidermis. In early to mid-summer, hair-like stalks (sporangiophores) form that produce multiple sporangia, which in turn release zoospores (swimming spores) under wet conditions. Zoospores are spread by rain splash and cause new infections. Due to prolific spore production, the disease can be very aggressive.

Management. Remove and destroy infected canes; create open canopy to improve drying; apply copper fungicides.



Orange fuzz on stem lesions is indicative of sporulation. Magnified view at right.

