

Alternaria leaf spot and fruit rot

Alternaria tenuissima (fungus)

Alternaria leaf spot occurs primarily in North Carolina, but Alternaria fruit rot occurs in most blueberry-growing regions.

Symptoms. Leaf lesions are circular to irregularly shaped, tan to gray, 1 to 5 mm in diameter, and surrounded by a reddish brown border. In most cases only lower leaves are infected, but a severe infection can defoliate the plant. On ripe fruit, sunken areas near the calyx are covered by a dark green, velvety growth. On stored fruit, a grayish-green mold may appear on the stem scar or calyx end and spread over the entire berry. Infected fruit becomes soft and shrivelled.



Disease cycle. The fungus overwinters in old twigs and in plant debris on the ground. Leaf infections occur in the spring during periods of cool, wet weather. Fruit infections occur as berries start to ripen. Disease development is optimal at 68°F (20°C).

Management. Plant resistant cultivars; reduce humidity in the planting; apply fungicides from bloom until harvest; harvest in a timely manner; handle berries dry; cool fruit after harvest.

Dark green to black spores on an infected berry in the field.



Fuzzy grayish green mold on stored berry.

