

PEACH LEAF CURL

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Peach leaf curl, caused by the fungus *Taphrina deformans* (Berk) Tulasne, occurs in springtime, especially when the weather is cool and wet. In the Southeast, leaf curl is seldom more than a curiosity in the coastal plain, but it is occasionally severe in the piedmont or mountain production areas. The leaf curl fungus survives epiphytically on twigs and as spores in infested/infected buds. Under cool, wet conditions, infested buds become infected. Varieties vary significantly in

susceptibility. Leaf curl is more severe in cooler production areas.

Affected leaves become thick, curled, and distorted; infected

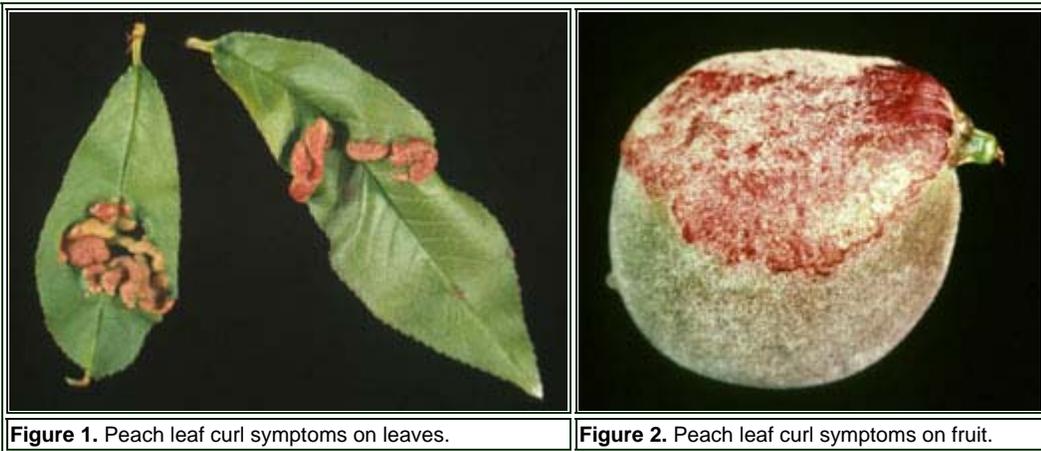


Figure 1. Peach leaf curl symptoms on leaves.

Figure 2. Peach leaf curl symptoms on fruit.

leaves are often flushed with yellow, red, or purple (Figure 1). During periods of cool, moist weather the fungus continues to multiply and infect emerging leaves and young fruit. Fruit infections appear as raised, wrinkled areas with reddish discoloration (Figure 2). Frequently only a few bumps are present. When the disease is severe, it can result in heavy defoliation, weakened trees, and reduced fruit set, yield, and quality. Leaf curl occasionally infects newly transplanted trees, even in the coastal plain, likely from infections initiated in field nurseries.

Save for the coolest southeastern production areas, established orchards are not sprayed for leaf curl. Perhaps one year in ten, leaf curl will be severe in susceptible varieties that were not sprayed the previous season. Leaf curl infections develop in cool, wet, protracted springs. Where leaf curl is common, excellent control can be obtained with a single application of a proper fungicide in early spring before the leaf buds begin to open.

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