

OLIVE ANTHRACNOSE

Caused by certain species of the fungus *Colletotrichum* - sometimes referred to as species complexes of *C. acutatum* and *C. gloeosporioides*.

Biology and damage

Anthraco­nose is a globally important disease of olives - and many other fruit and vegetable crops. Olive losses are due to reduced yields and poor oil quality. *Colletotrichum* spp. can survive on plant surfaces without infection - called epiphytic survival. Infected shoots, stems and leaves can be symptomless. In wet weather disease symptoms develop - drying and wilting of leaves, defoliation, and dieback of branches. Severe infection can cause reduced tree vigour. Spores spread with rain splash while insects may also passively spread spores on their bodies. Infection of flowers and young fruit occurs in spring (optimum temperatures 17-20°C) in wet conditions (up to 48 hr). Fruit infections are superficial and remain dormant - latent infections. In wet autumns and as fruit ripen, sunken lesions develop and masses of conidia (spores) form – seen as greasy pink, orange or brown areas on the fruit surface – called ‘soapy olive or soapy fruit’.



Ripe fruit with sunken lesions and gelatinous salmon pink spore masses. Lesions may have a faint concentric pattern.



Yellowish-brown ‘Soapy olive’ symptoms

Management

Prune to remove infected branches and to open tree canopies to air & sun. Remove or cover dropped leaves and fruit with compost; remove mummified fruit on trees. Timing fungicide applications is important - preventative treatments in winter; and preventative or eradicated products in spring, summer and autumn - depending on occurrence and duration of wet weather. Grow less susceptible varieties. Harvest fruit early, particularly if wet weather is expected or occurs near ripening. Balance plant nutrition – avoid excess nitrogen and ensure calcium levels are adequate. Note calcium becomes unavailable to plants under very wet or dry soil conditions – so regular watering or good drainage are important when fruit are developing to prevent deficiency.