Peach Leaf Curl

Peach leaf curl is the number one fungal disease of peaches and nectarines in western Washington, and it can sometimes affect apricots. It primarily affects the leaves and shoots, but fruit is occasionally attacked. The fungus overwinters on twigs and buds. This disease is a major problem of peaches in western Washington. Periods of cool, wet weather when the leaves are first opening on the tree favor the disease. Severe leaf drop affects fruit production, reduces vigor of trees, and increases susceptibility to winter injury. If left uncontrolled, infections may worsen and kill the tree.

Symptoms
Infected green shoots become thickened and distorted. Young leaves develop yellow to reddish discoloration and become thickened, crisp, and crinkled. Affected leaves are curled and deformed. A white powdery coating of the fungus later develops on infected leaves. Infected leaves either turn yellow and drop or remain on the tree, turning dark brown as the season progresses. Fruits may show swollen, reddish areas on the surface. These areas lack the normal peach fuzz.

Cultural Practices to limit Peach Leaf Curl
Plant resistant varieties. Leaf curl resistant peach cultivars include Frost (bred for that trait at the WSU Mt. Vernon research station), Indian Free, Muir, Nanaimo, Oregon Curl Free, and Salish Summer (formerly Q-1-8). The most resistant nectarine variety is Kreibich. **However, even resistant varieties will benefit from preventative spraying their first few seasons while they are getting established.**

Site Management/Spacing: be sure to site your fruit trees in full sun and spaced well apart.

Sanitation: Remove all infected leaves as soon as you see them. Pick up all fallen leaves, twigs, and fruit regularly to help prevent re-infection. Do not put in home compost bin or use leaves as mulch.

Pruning: Prune proactively to increase air movement and light penetration.

Watering: Avoid overhead watering which can spread spores if temperatures are below 78°F.

Spraying to Limit Recurrence:

- Start applying fungicides the first week of January.
- Repeat three times at about three-week intervals (so late January, mid/late February, early/mid March).
- If trees bloom during this time, stop spraying to protect bees. Wait until at least ¾ of the petals have fallen before spraying again.

- Homeowners are not advised to spray trees over 10 feet tall. Consult a commercial pesticide applicator for treatment of taller trees and shrubs.
- **Always follow label instructions.**

Organic Fungicide Sprays to Limit Leaf Curl

Copper: Bonide CAPTAIN JACK'S™ Liquid Copper Fungicide

Biological: Bonide Revitalize Bio-fungicide

Copper must be started before symptoms appear. It can even be applied in the autumn at leaf fall if the weather is dry. Revitalize is a bacteria-based immune stimulator for plants; use it in between copper sprays to strengthen the tree against leaf curt. It does not eradicate the disease.

Chemical Fungicides to Limit Leaf Curl

Bonide Fung-onil

Make first application at leaf fall in autumn, second in January, third in February. This product can be harmful to pollinators, so be sure not to allow spray on any nearby flowers in bloom if insects are active.

Monterey Liqui-Cop

A non-organic formulation of copper. Use at recommended rates (do not overapply), only before blossoms open.