

Plant Diseases

A little fall garden clean up will lead to fewer diseases next year and healthier ornamental plants. Some of Ontario's most common diseases are listed below, and how to manage them.



1. Powdery Mildew: White, powdery coating on lilacs, phlox, maples, peonies and veggies.

- Prevention/Management:

- o Improve air circulation by pruning back surrounding plants.
- o Water the base of the plant, and not the foliage and avoid watering late in the day.
- o Prune/rake infected material and dispose (not compost).
- o Apply a fungicide if necessary.



2. Black Spot (on Roses): Black circular leaf spots with yellowing.

- Prevention/Management:

- o Clean up all fallen leaves in fall and dispose – do not compost.
- o Prune and discard diseased canes. Disinfect pruners between cuttings.
- o Mulch base of plant to reduce spore splash and help overwinter the plant.
- o Water the base of the plant, and not the foliage and avoid watering late in the day.
- o Apply a fungicide if necessary.



3. Black Tar Spot (on Maples): Round black spots on maple leaves that turn yellow and drop.

- Prevention/Management:

- o Rake and remove fallen leaves in the fall.
- o Do not compost infected leaves (spores survive winter).
- o Ensure good air circulation around trees.
- o Fungicides are rarely needed since it's an aesthetic issue and will not damage the tree.



4. Apple Cedar Rust (on Ornamental Pear & Crabapple): Bright orange spots on leaves, sometimes with yellow halos; affects leaves and fruit.

- Prevention/Management:

- o Rake and remove fallen leaves and dispose. (not compost).
- o Avoid planting susceptible varieties near junipers (alternate host).



5. Black Knot (on Cherry & Plum Trees): Hard, black swellings ("knots") on branches and twigs.

- Prevention/Management:

- o Prune infected branches during the dormant season. (late winter) Disinfect pruners between cuts.
- o Destroy pruned wood; do not compost.



6. Needle Cast (Evergreens): Older needles turn yellow/brown and drop prematurely.

- Prevention/Management:

- o Rake and remove fallen needles.
- o Space evergreens to improve air flow.
- o Avoid overhead watering late in the day.