

dogwood anthracnose (*Discula destructiva*)



spots and cankers on all parts of dogwoods

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Discula destructiva

Dogwood anthracnose has spread rapidly and caused serious losses among flowering dogwoods. Infection begins in leaves and spreads to twigs and branches, which die back.

Main-stem infections cause cankers, which kill the trees. In the South, infection is most likely at higher elevations and on moist to wet sites. Shade increases risk of infection and mortality. High-value trees can be protected by mulching, pruning, and watering during droughts, and applying a fungicide. Initial symptoms of dogwood anthracnose are small tan leaf spots that develop into large tan blotches. Often a purple border occurs between dead and healthy tissues and occasionally the entire leaf is killed. In many cases, infected mature leaves are aborted prematurely; in other cases, infected leaves cling to the stems after normal leaf fall. Infections expand from leaves into small twigs.

The dieback of twigs and branches in the lower crown led to the original name of "lower-branch dieback". Numerous epicormic shoots often form along the entire length of the main stem and on major branches of infected plants. These shoots frequently become infected and die, and the infections proceed from the shoots into the main stem.

The fungus causes cankers that can kill the tree. Cankers may not be present on all the dead trees. Larger trees often die 2 to 3 years after the first symptoms are found in the leaves.