



## What are those spots on my leaves?

Most of the time the spots you see on leaves are fungal. In fact, the general term for this is "leaf spot fungus" although many types of fungi can be the cause. Here are some things you need to know about these leaf spots.

- The frequent splashing of water often contributes to the spread of leaf spot fungus. A wet spring, cool, damp summer weather, or an irrigation system that's hitting leaves frequently can contribute to leaf spots.
- Although you can't do anything about the weather, in areas where leaf spot regularly affects plants you can alter the irrigation so that it runs for a longer time but less often. (Our staff in the nursery summarizes this as "Deeply, Weekly.") Changing from a spray to a drip system could also be a solution.
- Some plants are more prone to leaf spot than others. Hydrangeas and red-twig dogwood are two examples of such plants. Even different varieties of the same type of plant can show either resistance to or the prevalence of fungal spots. This often explains why one Hydrangea is covered with spots while another one only has a few such blemishes.
- Some evergreen plants show leaf spot on the older leaves in the spring. That damage happened the previous year, but is more prominent after the winter. Some of these leaves may fall off as the new leaves grow during the summer.
- Often people attribute leaf spot damage to insects. After the fungus kills the leaf tissue, it drops out leaving holes or edges that look chewed. If you see holes, look for brown spots where the tissue hasn't fallen away. This is the sign that a fungus is causing the damage, not insects.
- Leaf spot might be slowed by the use of a fungicide, but these work best if you start to apply them before the plant has the problem. Come into the store and talk with our staff in the Garden Room to find a product that's best suited to your situation. Use any fungicide according to the directions on the label.
- The good news: leaf spot seldom kills a plant, and deciduous plants with bad fungal infections will be dropping those leaves in the fall anyway. Be sure to rake and remove badly infected foliage so that any spores that remain on fallen leaves can be removed from the area.