

Pear Rust

Pear rust is an extremely common pear problem that affects both ornamental and fruiting pear trees. The disease is called cedar-hawthorn rust and often causes only aesthetic damage in the form of 1/8 to ¼ inch orange spots on pear leaves. While spraying to control pear rust is generally not recommended, this year we have received many calls that indicate that the rust affected trees with greater severity in 2020 and control should be considered.

While most people are not familiar with cedar-hawthorn rust, they are familiar with cedar-apple rust, another rust disease that affects juniper and apple trees. While the diseases are different, cedar-apple rust can show us an important indicator of when to treat our pear trees for cedar-hawthorn rust. When cedar-apple rust appears on junipers as largish orange globs that is your indication that it's time to spray your pears. These globes often appear after heavy rains in the spring. If you wait until the orange spots appear on your pear tree it will be too late to spray.

Typically, the window to spray occurs when the rust is active, sometime from April to May. No sprays should be applied after May. There are a few fungicides that work but using a fungicide with myclobutanil as an active ingredient has a substantial advantage. Most fungicides must be sprayed preventively (before the disease is present on the leaf) to be effective. Myclobutanil works by killing the spores up to four days after it germinates on the leaf, although the spots will not be visible at this time. Products that contain myclobutanil include; Immunox, Immunox Plus and Fertilome F-Stop Lawn & Garden Spray. Once you see the orange globes on juniper trees, use a myclobutanil product to spray your pears. For each product, follow the label exactly and pay attention to the timeline for reapplication.

In a typical year, pear rust causes ugly orange spots throughout the summer, but has little effect on overall tree health. This year however, we have had a high volume of calls about pear leaves turning completely brown and falling off late in the summer. This defoliation can affect tree health and should be an indication to homeowners to prepare to treat in the spring of 2021.

As always, keeping trees well-watered, especially in summer heat and into the winter months can help reduce the trees overall stress. Ornamental pears appear in many residential landscapes as they were a popular tree for many years. The trees have a few undesirable traits like pear rust and the strong odor of their spring flowers. If you aren't enjoying the pear in your landscape, consider an alternative flowering tree like a serviceberry or Chinese fringetree. For more information on how to care for new and established trees and resources for tree selection, visit our website: <https://www.shawnee.k-state.edu/lawn-garden/trees.html>