

Scorch

Scorch virus

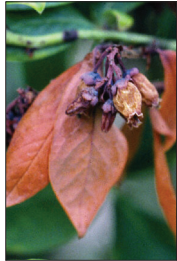
Scorch is a serious disease of blueberries on both coasts of North America, but it has not been found in the Midwest. In New Jersey, it is also known as Sheep Pen Hill disease, which is caused by a different strain of the same virus.



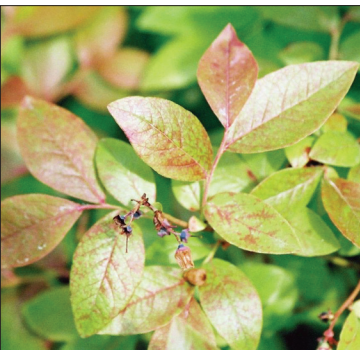
Blighted flowers are brown at first but later bleach to gray.

Symptoms. In some cultivars, a sudden and complete necrosis of flowers and leaves occurs, while others remain symptomless. Twigs may die back 4 to 10 cm. The scorched blossoms are often retained throughout the summer. Severe infections can kill the bush. Symptoms may be confused with spring frost injury or other blossom blights.

Disease cycle. The scorch virus is vectored by aphids and spreads quickly in the field in a radial pattern from a point source. Eventually all bushes in a field may become infected. The virus spreads readily to neighboring fields but usually not more than a half-mile. Mechanical harvesters may spread the aphids that carry the virus.



Leaf necrosis (above and below).



In Sheep Pen Hill disease, leaves often show a line pattern in the fall.



Scorch – *continued*

Management. Plant virus-tested, clean planting stock; test bushes showing symptoms to confirm the disease; remove and burn infected bushes; plant tolerant cultivars (these remain a source of infection, however); apply insecticides to control aphids; clean harvesting equipment.



Some cultivars also exhibit marginal leaf chlorosis.

Additional resources:

- [Regional Pest Alert: Blueberry Scorch Virus; North Central IPM Center](#)
- [Pest Alert and Fact Sheet: Blueberry Scorch Virus; USDA Horticultural Crops Laboratory](#)
- [Blueberry Scorch Virus; British Columbia Ministry of Agriculture and Lands](#)
- [An Online Guide to Plant Disease Control, Blueberry Scorch; Oregon State University Extension](#)
- [Integrated Pest Management for Blueberries: Blueberry Scorch Virus; Washington State University Extension](#)
- [Blueberry Scorch Virus \(BIScV\) Factsheet: University of Massachusetts Extension](#)