

Identifying Early Rot in the Field

What is early rot of cranberry? Early rot is a cranberry disease that causes leaf spots, premature leaf drop, and fruit rot. Early rot is caused by the fungus *Phyllosticta vaccinii*.



Left: Early rot symptoms in a new planting in September. Leaf spots are tan to brown and sometimes have dark red margins. By late summer, significant leaf drop can occur. **Above:** Leaves from plant at left. Tiny black pycnidia (fungal fruiting bodies) form within spots on the upper surfaces of leaves.



Early rot on fruit appears as a soft, watery spot, usually with distinct margins. The spot is often lighter in color than the rest of the berry. Dark, concentric rings sometimes form, resembling a bull's eye.

Why scout for early rot? Early rot can be severe in some cranberry growing regions of the U.S., requiring the use of fungicides to control the disease. Since 2005, this disease has been detected in young plantings at several sites in Wisconsin.

What should growers do? Growers should become familiar with early rot and report suspicious symptoms to their crop consultant or submit a sample to the UW-Madison Plant Disease Diagnostics Clinic, 1630 Linden Drive, Madison, WI 53706 (ppdc.wisc.edu).

How can you distinguish early rot from other diseases? The fruit rot phase of early rot is often difficult to distinguish from other cranberry fruit rot diseases. However, early rot appears on berries as early as late July, whereas most other types of rot appear in September in Wisconsin. Some other leaf spot diseases and how to distinguish them from early rot are described below.



End rot. Symptoms on leaves are rare but very similar to early rot symptoms. Older lesions turn gray. Positive diagnosis requires microscopy.



Brown leaf. The cause is not known. Leaves turn brown starting in June. Sometimes just one half of a leaf is affected.



Red leaf spot. Bright red spots with yellow borders appear in July. Diseased leaves (right) are sometimes shorter and rounder than healthy leaves (left). Spots turn black later in the summer.



Cladosporium leaf spot. Small brown lesions on previous season's leaves. Spots have white or gray centers.



Protoventuria leaf spot. Gray to black circular spots with bull's eye pattern appear on previous season's leaves.

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