

# PESTS & DISEASES – PEACH LEAF CURL

Peach leaf curl is a fungal disease affecting peaches, nectarines, almonds and apricots. The disease is carried in droplets of rain water carried on birds claws and therefore easily transmitted from tree to tree.

**DAMAGE:** Raised pustules appear on the leaves, causing them to fall prematurely. It is generally noticeable in Spring soon after the first leaves appear. Peach leaf curl or to give it its proper name *Taphrina deformans* can cause the leaves to crumple, thicken and become distorted, the raised pustules are often red in colour and leaves will often have a white bloom (which is the fungal spores) on affected leaves. Diseased leaves will begin to drop rapidly. Although peach leaf curl will ultimately not kill the tree, it is unsightly and can greatly reduce cropping potential. New shoots and fruits can also be affected by the disease.

**TREATMENT:** Peach leaf curl can easily be prevented by installing a rain shield made from a polythene sheet. It should cover all of the tree but with open ends to allow pollinating insects to carry out their important duties. The rain shield should be installed when the tree becomes dormant and stay in situ until the weather turns milder (traditionally mid-May). If any diseased leaves are present do remove these as soon as possible and remove off site. DO NOT COMPOST.



## HOW ARE DISEASES SPREAD?

Most fungal infections are carried by spores being blown, from one plant to another by the wind, or transmitted in water splashes. Bacterial infections are spread in the same way although insects can also carry them. Viruses are transmitted by sap-feeding insects, especially aphids.

## PREVENTING DISEASE

Plants are most at risk when they have just been pruned or are damaged. It is imperative to prune at the correct time of the year – Winter season (when the tree is dormant (lost all of it's leaves)) for fruits with a pip; apples, pears and quinces. Growing season (July/August even if fruit is on the tree) for stone fruits; apricots, cherries, gages, nectarines, peaches and plums.

### ■ Do not overcrowd trees

Make sure they are planted with sufficient space between. Free-standing trees should not be planted near fences/walls/buildings etc.

### ■ Weed, water and feed your trees

Especially through dry spells. The healthier your tree is the more resistant to infection and disease it will be.

### ■ Disinfect tools

Before and after use, especially when pruning.

### ■ Dispose of infected matter

Clear all windfalls, pruning and any infected/diseased leaves. Burn or remove from site rather than composting.