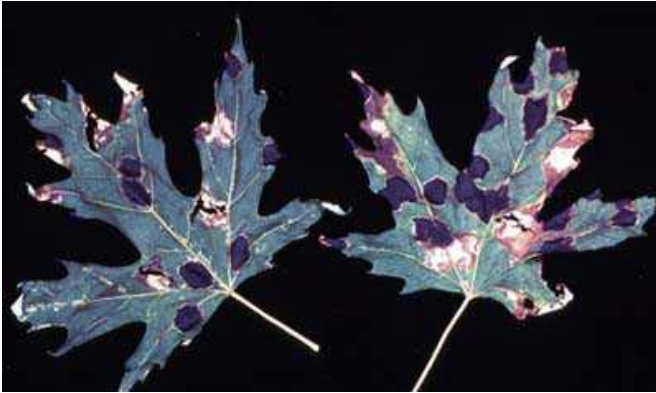


PRESS RELEASE

September 16, 2004

EXACTLY WHAT ARE THE BLACK SPOTS ON MY MAPLE LEAVES?



Many people have been calling the MSU Extension office and bringing in maple leaves with black spots all over them. The most common questions are “What is this?”, “What can I do about it?” and “Will it kill my tree?”.

The problem with these trees is simply called “Tar Spot”. Tar spot is a harmless fungal disease that starts in the spring as a small pinpoint infection, and spreads in summer to a large yellow spot on the leaves. As the summer progresses, the area will become dark and hence the name of the disease. The areas will appear as black-colored shiny areas on the leaves and sometimes can be somewhat raised on the individual leaves.

This is a cosmetic, harmless and nuisance disease that probably will not harm or kill trees. Because this disease shows up late in the season and near the time of leaf drop, it’s of little significance to the health of your maple trees. Quite often almost 100% of the foliage is infected and many homeowners become rather alarmed.

The most effective management procedure is to rake and destroy leaves in the fall. This will reduce the number of over-wintering spots which can produce spores next spring. It’s not a good idea to mulch diseased leaves back into the lawn. Composting is also not a good idea because most compost piles don’t get hot enough to destroy the spores.

If you have any questions, feel free to contact the MSU Extension Office at 772-0911, ext. 302. You may also contact the Master Gardener Hotline at 772-0911, ext. 328.