

Azalea Leaf Gall

Leaf gall can be a troublesome disease of azaleas in Delaware during wet springs. It may also occur on rhododendrons and camellia. It is most noticeable after new growth begins in the spring.

Cause

This disease is caused by a fungus, *Exobasidium vaccinii* on azaleas and rhododendron and *E. camelliae* on camellia. The fungus is wind-borne and may overwinter as spores on the bark and in bud scales.

Symptoms

All or only part of the leaves may be affected. They become distorted (thickened or fleshy) and turn pale green or whitish. When young, these gall-like leaves are covered with a mealy fungus growth. As the galls age, they turn brown and degenerate. Flower parts may also be affected.

When this disease is severe it may reduce vigor of the plant due to the loss of young leaves, but is usually a cosmetic disease, only affecting the appearance of the infected plant.



Factors Affecting Development

Leaf gall is usually most severe on plants growing in very shaded locations or in locations where air movement is restricted and evaporation poor. The disease is seldom a problem during dry springs or when plants are in sunny locations. Infection occurs when moisture is ample from abundant rain or overhead irrigation.

Control

Once the disease appears, there is no practical method of control except to pick off and destroy the infected plant parts. This is possible where only a few galls are present on the plants. This reduces the source of spores and may provide adequate control of the disease.

Caution The information and recommendations in these fact sheets were developed for Delaware conditions and may not apply in other areas.