

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND

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## Brown Rot on Ornamental Cherries - Trees



*Brown rot infected leaves of a cherry tree*

### Key Points

- **Brown rot is a fungal infection** that attacks flowering cherry trees, **especially the cultivar 'Kwansan'** later in spring just as the flowers are starting to fade.
- **This relatively new disease is really an old orchard disease of stone fruit called brown rot.** In Maryland landscapes, this disease is caused by the fungus *Monilinia laxa*. Brown rot on fruit producing cherries is a common disease found in fruit orchards. Management in the orchard relies on good sanitation and proper timing of protectant fungicides
- **The first symptoms often seen are browning and the collapse of the blossoms followed closely by the death of the small twigs.**
- The symptoms look like [fire blight](#) [1], but cherries are not susceptible to that disease.
- [Management](#)

# Disease Progression

- If the **infected blossoms do not drop off**, the fungus can grow through the flower stem (pedicel) and into the twig below.
- **Twigs develop elliptical cankers with profuse gumming** at the margin between diseased and healthy tissue.
- **Leaves on these infected shoots turn brown and wither, but remain attached.**
- Sometimes, twigs are girdled and killed.
- **During wet weather in May and June, the fungus sporulates (produces spores which spread disease) on the surface of infected twig cankers.**
- Cankers enlarge from season to season, and sporulation may continue on large cankers for 4 years or more.
- **In rainy weather, the appearance of powdery tufts of brown-gray spores are visible on the outside of infected flowers, infected fruit, or twig surfaces.**



## Management

- In ornamentals, this disease is a relatively new problem and the control has not been studied extensively.
- Pruning blighted (diseased) shoots back to healthy tissue during dry weather may help, but is difficult if there is a large number of them.

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## Links

[1] <https://extension.umd.edu/node/8859>

[2] <https://extension.umd.edu/sections/home-and-garden-information-center>