

TAR SPOT ON MAPLES

Tar spots are caused by several different kinds of related fungi and appears as raised black spots on the upper leaf surfaces of maples. This disease is rarely serious enough to threaten the health of the tree 'but it can distress homeowners because of its unsightliness and, in heavy infestations, early leaf drop.

The first symptoms show up in mid-June as small pale yellow spots. By early August, the spots start to darken and thicken until late September, when it takes on a tar-like appearance. On Norway maples, the spots first appear as black specks in late July or early August before growing to a mass of up to 1 to 2 inches diameter.

Trees are infected in the spring, when the fungus from the previous year's leaves ripen and send up spores into the wind. For this reason, one of the best ways to help prevent tar spot is to rake and remove infected leaves each fall. The use of fungicide is generally considered impractical and a waste of time and money, especially considering that no long term damage is caused by the fungus.

The **Master Gardener Hotline** is open from April to October, Monday through Friday. Lines are available 9:00 am to noon and 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm at 888-678-3464

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