

Black Canker and Scab of Willow

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Black canker and scab of willow (*Salix*) are two diseases that often occur together. The term willow blight is often used in reference to simultaneous infections. These diseases cause defoliation and twig dieback that can lead to tree death. Black canker and scab occur throughout the eastern and central US and in the Pacific Northwest.

Willow scab is caused by the fungus *Venturia saliciperda*. The fungus overwinters on dead twigs and infects succulent new growth in Spring. Leaves and twigs become less susceptible to infection when the growth hardens-off later in the growing season.

Black canker is caused by the fungus *Glomerella miyabeana*. This disease occurs later in the season and can cause cankers on twigs and branches. The pathogen overwinters as spores on dead twigs.

Symptoms

Symptoms caused by willow scab and black canker are similar. Leaf symptoms include dark brown to black colored spots (lesions). Leaves eventually shrivel, droop, and die as the pathogens progress down the leaf petiole and into the twig where brown to black cankers form (Figure 1). In the case of willow scab, olive-brown velvet spore masses will form on dead leaf and petiole tissue. Black canker produces a peach colored spore mass in early summer on cankers (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Symptoms of black canker and willow scab



Figure 1: Willow scab leaf



Control

Black canker and willow scab can be controlled through a combination of cultural and chemical treatments. Chemical treatments consist of properly timed fungicide applications to reduce pathogen infection and symptom development. Pruning diseased twigs and branches and fertilization based on soil analysis are effective cultural treatments that will reduce disease severity and improve tree vigor.



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