Hibiscus leaf spot

O M. Goss
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HIBISCUS LEAF SPOT

By OLGA M. GOSS, B.Sc. (Hons.), Plant Pathologist

HIBISCUS shrubs, particularly the variety “Apple Blossom” are commonly affected during the winter and early spring months with an unsightly leaf spot disease.

Although this disease causes considerable concern it does not seriously affect the plants and the new spring growth is always free from spotting. The organism causing this disease is the bacterium *Pseudomonas syringae*.

**Symptoms**

The disease appears as purplish-black more or less circular dots which range from pinpoint size up to ½ in. diameter (Fig. 1). Older spots frequently develop a light ash coloured centre.

**Development of the Disease**

The leaf spotting bacterium is a weak parasite and can only attack hibiscus during the winter and early spring when the plants have little vigour. Later as temperatures increase, conditions become less favourable for the bacterium and the new spring growth of the hibiscus is free from spotting.

**Control**

Diseased fallen leaves and prunings should be raked up and burnt, so as to reduce the source of infection for the following year. Spraying is normally unnecessary, but, if an exceptionally severe outbreak occurs, one application of Bordeaux mixture 4 : 4 : 40 or copper oxychloride (1 oz. in 3 gallons of water) should arrest the spread of the disease.
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