

# Corn anthracnose can reduce yields

NEWARK, Del — Corn anthracnose was a problem for many Delaware growers last year and is now showing up again. The early season leaf

blight phase can occur as early as June on lower leaves of plants, says University of Delaware extension plant pathologist Bob Mulrooney.

The corn seems to tolerate the disease until it reappears later in the season when weather conditions are favorable. At that time it can spread to the upper leaves and as the plant matures, black, shiny stalk rot symptoms become visible.

Depending on the variety you're growing, the fungus causes yield losses due to reduced leaf areas, lodged corn, or light test weight.

In general, says the specialist, anthracnose is favored by warm, wet weather. During the leaf blight phase, the fungus causes brown, oval to elongated lesions or spots about one-fourth to one-half inch in diameter. Their actual size and shape will vary from one hybrid to another.

Yellow to yellow-orange areas often surround the spots.

If you look at one of these spots through a hand lens you can often see spore masses or fruiting bodies of the fungus. They appear as very small black spines rising from the surface of the leaf.

Without these black spines

and without a hand lens, anthracnose can look very much like several other foliage diseases.

The fungus overwinters on corn debris—especially on the soil surface. The disease can be more serious under minimum tillage and continuous corn. There's some evidence that long periods of low light intensity and long exposure to high humidity also intensify the condition.

Control measures are being focused on the development of resistant varieties. Many universities and commercial seed companies are working now to incorporate better resistance to both the leaf blight and stalk rot phases of the disease.

There was a problem or becomes one on your corn, it's important to plant the most resistant variety available—especially if you irrigate, since this will certainly keep the humidity high in fields.

If you're committed to minimum tillage and are having problems with the disease, chop the stalks and cover them with soil after harvest to minimize carry-over, or rotate to another crop if possible. Or plant a resistant variety.

Even though the more resistant hybrids sometimes

show signs of the disease, they seldom incur yield losses.

Look for anthracnose first in fields which have been in continuous corn, in min-

imum tillage, or where the disease was present last year. You're most likely to find symptoms after long periods of heavily overcast or rainy weather.

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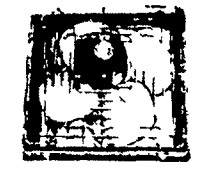
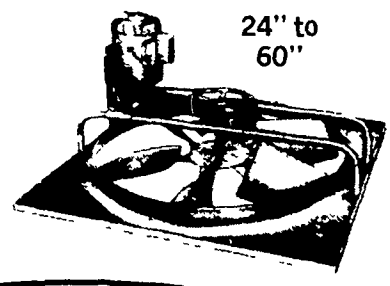
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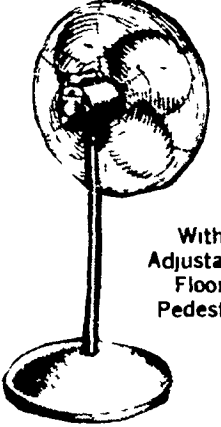

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