

Botryosphaeria stem canker

Botryosphaeria corticis (fungus)

Botryosphaeria stem canker is a serious disease of blueberries in the southeastern United States.

Symptoms. Early symptoms are small red lesions on succulent stems. The lesions become swollen and broadly conical in about 6 months. On susceptible cultivars, large, swollen cankers develop, with deep cracks and numerous fruiting bodies, after 2 to 3 years. Stems may be girdled and killed.



Early (left) and late (right) symptoms on blueberry stems. Note swelling and cracking on old stem.

Disease cycle. The fungus overwinters in infected canes. Current-season stems are infected by ascospores or conidia in late spring.

The optimum temperature for growth and sporulation of the fungus is 77 to 82°F (25 to 28°C). Eight races of the fungus are known.

Management. Plant resistant cultivars; use disease-free planting material; remove and destroy infected canes. In general, fungicides are ineffective.



Mature bush with several canes killed by stem canker.