

Peach leaf curl

Affects only peaches and nectarines. If leaves are curled on another type of fruit tree (such as plums or pluots), look for aphids.

If you don't spray your peach and nectarine trees, you will get more peach leaf curl than you would otherwise.

First sign of leaf curl varies from year to year, mostly depending on whether it rained just before the leaves and flowers come out.

Leaf curl can be reduced by spraying when the trees are dormant. The dormant season spray used is liquid copper, available in two forms, one of which is certified organic. Spray needs to be applied all over the tree before the buds show any color, usually by mid-February.

Dormant spray materials available now are much less effective at reducing leaf infection than the older materials were. Spray materials mentioned in older references (copper sulfate and lime sulfur) were both discontinued several years ago. Bordeaux mixture is not practical for homeowners to make.



Once you have curled leaves, it is too late to do anything this season.

The tree will outgrow leaf curl within a few weeks.

Leaf curl rarely infects the blossoms or the fruit¹, does not significantly affect yield for homeowners, nor does it reduce the quality of the fruit. It simply reduces the vigor of the tree somewhat since fully infected leaves tend to drop. By May you usually can't find any affected leaves.

Bottom line: it is helpful but not absolutely necessary to spray for leaf curl. Infection varies from year to year. The tree will outgrow it. Sprays can reduce it somewhat. You spray while the tree is dormant, just before bud break.

Caused by a fungus: *Taphrina deformans*.

Infection requires temperatures between about 50 – 70 degrees F, with rainfall for a couple of days while in that temperature range.

¹ On rare occasions the skin of some fruit may be infected. I have never seen blossoms infected here.