

Apple scab and pear scab

GWF204
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Scab is a very common disease of apple and pear trees. The seriousness of attacks can vary greatly, and this will determine what action you should take.

Q What is scab?

A Apple scab and pear scab are diseases that affect both leaves and fruit.

Q How do I recognise scab?

A Leaves develop dark greenish-brown spots or patches and may fall prematurely. Dark or corky patches can appear on fruit.

If extensive, the corky patches crack, often in a pattern of small squares, causing considerable damage to the fruit.

On badly affected trees the twigs will develop blistered swellings that burst in spring, releasing disease spores.

Q What causes scab?

A The fungus *Venturia inaequalis* affects apples, and the related *V. pirina* affects pears. The disease is likely to be worse in mild, damp weather and some varieties are more susceptible.

Q How serious are apple scab and pear scab?

A A mild attack will cause only cosmetic damage, but a severe attack will weaken the tree and spoil a lot of the fruit. Damage to shoots by scab can also provide entry points for the spores of canker, a more serious disease.

Q Will it spread to other types of garden plants?

A Apple scab and pear scab only affect these trees, but related fungi, such as pyracantha scab, will attack other garden plants.

Q Can the damaged fruit be used?

A Yes. Peel off the scabby bits. The affected fruit can usually be stored successfully unless it is badly cracked.

Q What about resistant varieties?

A Any variety can get scab, but good varieties showing more than average resistance include the following. Apples: 'Discovery', 'Egremont Russet' and 'Falstaff'; Pears: 'Beurré Hardy' and 'Conference'.

Q Are there any varieties to avoid?

A These varieties are particularly susceptible to scab. Apples: 'Bramley's Seedling', 'Cox's Orange Pippin', 'Gala', 'James Grieve' and 'Laxton's Superb'; Pear: 'Williams Bon Crétien'.

Q What about crab apples?

A Scab can also attack crab apples. The variety 'John Downie'

is very susceptible.

Q How can I control the disease?

A Once established, it cannot be controlled that season.

Q What can I do to prevent it?

A Clearing up and burning fallen leaves from infected trees reduces the numbers of spores available to reinfect trees next season. With badly affected trees, cutting out twigs with scabby swellings will also help. Susceptible varieties will probably also need spraying, to keep the disease under control. Spray with a contact fungicide containing mancozeb as recommended on the packet.

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