

Anthracnose

Colletotricum acutatum

Damage:

The anthracnose fungus can infect almost any part of the strawberry plant, and the characteristic fruit infections are often seen without obvious plant infections. When crowns are infected, whole plants can wilt. Stolons can be girdled by black lesions, and flowers can be infected and killed, while leaf spotting is rare.

Identification:



Both anthracnose and phytophthora can cause plant collapse and browning inside the crown; anthracnose tends towards reddish while phytophthora is more chocolate-brown. A diagnostic lab will be required to distinguish between crown rot caused by anthracnose and that caused by phytophthora.

Fruit lesions caused by anthracnose are characteristic, and orange/pink gooey spore masses will grow after overnight incubation in a humid, warm container.

Spread:

Anthracnose is a soil-borne pathogen and spores can survive almost a year without host plants. Besides strawberries, chickweed and vetch are known weedy hosts, and there are likely others.

The fungus infects strawberry plants through roots and flower/fruit through soil splash. Infected nursery plants are often symptomless, and it's common for fruit lesions to be the first noticeable damage. Hot weather (15–30°C) favours disease development.

Control:

Plant production	Start with healthy strawberry transplants, free of anthracnose. Soilless transplants should be anthracnose-free, but even soilless transplants can become contaminated in the propagation cycle unless care is taken. Hot water treatments of transplants can reduce but not eliminate anthracnose infections. There is a wide range of cultivar susceptibility – avoid susceptible ones. Use fungicides against anthracnose during plant propagation.
Pre-flower	Fumigate soils where disease carry-over from previous crops is a problem. The pre-flower fungicide options are more effective than those that can be used during fruiting – treat preventatively if there is reason to believe plants could have symptomless infections from the nursery.
Flowering and fruiting	Avoid soil splash by mulching between beds soon after planting, thereby preventing soil splash. Scout for plant and fruit symptoms. Use effective fungicides.