

I've noticed a lot of orange spots on the leaves of my caneberries. Are these harmful to the plant, and are they going to spread to my roses?

The orange spots you describe are more than likely a fungal disease called rust, of which there are several types which occur on caneberries.

Rusts are specific pathogens, and will not cross over to other plant families, so the rust you see on your caneberries will not go to the roses. In fact, there are rusts specific to the several types of caneberries, including blackberries, red raspberries, black raspberries and purple raspberries.

Probably the most common type of rust in the Monterey Bay area is yellow rust which occurs mainly on the red raspberries. Orange spots, or pustules, will appear on the upper surface of the older leaves early in the season, followed by the appearance of fluffy yellow to orange spots on the leaf undersides later on in June and July. In August, many darker growths will appear on top of and around these yellow and orange pustules. Although heavy infestations of this rust can result in noticeable fruit yield reductions, it is not normally capable of killing the plant. There are several fungicides registered for control of yellow rust, and one can also limit the spread of this disease by managing the raspberry hedgerow to maintain air circulation and keep leaves dry.

A rust occurring on blackberries in the Monterey Bay region is more serious. This rust is orange rust, and it is systemic, which means it spreads through the plant and grows into plant crowns and roots and remains in the plant for life. Although orange rust is not known to outright kill plants, it weakens them severely, and infected plants produce very little fruit, if any.

Emerging leaves of infected plants appear stunted, deformed, and yellowish. From afar, the plant tends to have lightly foliated, spindly appearance. Later, you can find on the undersides of diseased leaves wavy shaped, waxy orange growths which soon turn to a powdery bright orange as they rupture and release spores. Late in the season brown to black pustules will develop on lower leaf surfaces. A notable symptom is the growth of many small, typically weak shoots from the base of the plant, and such shoots are usually not productive.

The only way to control orange rust is to remove the plant from the field, roots and all, and destroy it.

The above has been a brief guide to the two most common rusts of caneberries occurring in the Monterey Bay area. Please contact Mark Bolda at UCCE Santa Cruz if you have more questions on this topic or any other topics concerning blackberry, raspberry or strawberry production.