Plant Disease Diagnostics Clinic #877
Department of Plant Pathology
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September 22, 2011

Ann Thewis
W432 Thewis Rd.
Cochrane, WI 54622

Dear Ann:

I have completed the analysis of the black currant sample that Ruth Genger of the UW-Madison Department of Plant Pathology submitted on your behalf to the Plant Disease Diagnostics Clinic. I initially showed your sample to Phil Pellitteri, our insect diagnostician, for comment. Phil commented that although he could find no evidence of insect activity in your sample, there is a currant borer that can cause damage to this crop. He suggested looking for tunneling (typical for this insect) in the crowns of your shrubs. If you have questions regarding this insect, feel free to call Phil at (608) 262-6510.

I subsequently used standard isolation techniques in an effort to recover potential pathogens from the branches that you provided. In addition, I incubated leaves and branches from your sample in a moist chamber for several days in an effort to induce potential pathogens to sporulate if present.

I did not find substantial pathogen activity in this sample. I noted a small number of fruiting bodies (reproductive structures) of the fungus *Phyllosticta* on the leaves that you provided. This fungus is a common leaf spot organism. This fungus did not appear to be prevalent, and I do not consider it a major contributor to the dieback you have observed. On a select number of branches, I found fruiting bodies of the fungus *Sphaeropsis*. This fungus is a common canker organism that can infect branches, girdle them and cause branch dieback. The best way to manage canker diseases like Sphaeropsis canker is by pruning. I suggest pruning four to six inches below the dead/dying area on affected branches and disposing of the branches by burning or burying them. Be sure to disinfest your pruning tools between cuts by dipping them in 10% bleach, or 70% alcohol (spray disinfectants that are at least 70% alcohol work well). This will help prevent accidental movement of pathogens during the pruning process. In general, I recommend that pruning be done in the late fall and winter.

I have some concerns that a root or crown rot problem could be a contributing factor in the dieback you have observed. Root and crown infections limit water uptake and movement within plants and can eventually lead to branch dieback. I would be happy to look for such problems if you can provide me with a root and crown sample. There would be no additional charge for this follow-up analysis. If you decide to resubmit, please reference the number in the upper right corner of this letter with your resubmission.

I hope this information is of help to you. Please let me know if you have any questions. Thanks again for using the Plant Disease Diagnostics Clinic.

Sincerely,

Brian Hudelson
Senior Outreach Specialist

Xc: Buffalo County UW-Extension agriculture/horticulture agent
Ruth Genger, UW-Madison, Department of Plant Pathology