

Post Rock Answers

By Cassie Thiessen August 29, 2025

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Lilac Leaf Spot

Lilacs are loved for their beautiful fragrance and vibrant spring blooms. Unfortunately, this time of year, you may notice brown leaf spots and a sickly appearance. This decline is often caused by fungal leaf spot diseases, which thrive in late summer conditions. The good news is that these issues are usually cosmetic and temporary. In most cases, the plant naturally bounces back and will return healthy and full of life in spring.

Leaf spots on lilac normally only show up during wet, humid growing seasons. Individual spots may coalesce and lead to the death of large areas of the leaf. Severe cases may cause the plant to defoliate.

Though the shrubs look bad, loss of leaves late in the season will not harm otherwise healthy plants. Therefore, there is no need to apply a fungicide. Also, an application after the leaf spots appear will not help anyway.

This disease is weather-dependent and requires wet, humid weather when new leaves are developing to flourish. Symptoms usually present late enough in the season that damage to the plant is negligible. Therefore, there is no need for a fungicide application as the overall health of an otherwise healthy lilac will not be impacted. However, you can help your lilacs by raking up and composting or discarding diseased leaves to reduce disease inoculum the following year.

Though the effect on the health of the shrub is minor, the disease is unsightly. If repeated severe infections occur, preventative spring fungicide applications may help prevent disease. If you would like to use a fungicide as a preventative, myclobutanil is recommended. Myclobutanil

is found in Immunox; F-Stop Lawn & Garden Fungicide and Monterey Fungi-Max. Apply every 10 to 14 days as leaves are developing in early spring.

Lilacs are a great addition to your landscape. They are hardy plants that come back year after year. If you have questions about the plants in your landscape, contact your local extension office.

Post Rock Extension District of K-State Research and Extension serves Jewell, Lincoln, Mitchell, Osborne, and Smith counties. Cassie may be contacted at cthiessen@ksu.edu or by calling Beloit (785-738-3597). Find us online at www.postrock.ksu.edu