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Asparagus

Asparagus Rust (*Puccinia asparagi*)

- Rust disease of asparagus is caused by the fungus *Puccinia asparagi*.
- Rust is only a problem on fern not the spears.
- Infected fern is defoliated reducing the potential yield of next seasons crop.
- First detected in Queensland in 2000 and in Victoria in 2003



Infection and symptoms

Infections of asparagus rust begin in spring from over-wintering spores on crop debris. Rust has several visual spore stages known as the orange, red and black spore stages. Visual symptoms of infection start in spring/summer with light green pustules on new emerging fern which mature into yellow or pale orange pustules.

In early to mid summer when conditions are warm and moist, the orange spores spread to new fern growth producing brick red pustules on stalks, branches and leaves of the fern. These develop into powdery masses of rust-red coloured spores which reinfect the fern.

Infected fern begins to yellow, defoliate and die back prematurely. In late autumn and winter the red-coloured pustules start to produce black spores and slowly convert in appearance to a powdery mass of jet-black spores. This is the over-wintering stage of the fungus and the source of the next seasons infection.



Control Strategies

Complete eradication of the disease is not feasible as rust spores are spread by wind. However rust can be controlled with proper fern management.

- Scout for early signs for rust and implement fungicide spray program
- Volunteer and other unwanted asparagus plantings must be destroyed to control infection sources.
- Extra care should be taken with hygiene as spores can be spread on clothing and equipment.
- Be aware of current quarantine restrictions.

NOTE:

Removal of debris will reduce the amount of infectious material but will not eliminate all source of disease.

For more information contact:

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Websites used to prepare this fact sheet:

http://www.ipm.msu.edu/CAT01_veg/V05-16-01.htm
http://www.ipm.msu.edu/CAT03_veg/V05-07-03.htm#5
<http://www.dpi.qld.gov.au/health/4238.html>

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Crops of interest :

For more information please contact your local VegCheque officer.

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