

LOUISIANA PLANT PATHOLOGY

DISEASE IDENTIFICATION AND MANAGEMENT SERIES

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Fig Rust

Cerotelium (Physopella) fici (E.J. Butler) Arthur

Fig rust, caused by the fungus *Cerotelium fici* (formerly *Physopella fici*), is the most common disease of figs in Louisiana and the Gulf Coast region of the southeastern U.S. Fig rust occurs only on the leaves and does not affect the fruit directly. Rust generally develops late in the summer, and in years when disease is severe, it can cause the trees to defoliate in a matter of a few weeks. If this happens on a regular basis, the overall growth of the trees can be reduced and yields can be affected. Another consequence of defoliation is that if it occurs early in the summer, the trees will put out new growth that is then at risk of being damaged by early frosts. On the other hand, if defoliation occurs in the fall, the trees may go dormant earlier than usual, which then protects them from early frosts.

Initially, symptoms of fig rust are visible as small, yellowish spots on the upper surface of the leaves. As these spots (or lesions) grow larger, they turn a reddish-brown color but remain relatively smooth. On the lower surface of the leaf, the lesions are a reddish-brown color and have a slightly raised, blister-like appearance. Heavily infected leaves often turn yellow or brown, particularly around the edges, and drop prematurely.

Since there are no fungicides registered for use on edible figs in Louisiana, the management of this disease relies solely on the use of cultural practices, such as raking up and destroying infected leaves and selective pruning of the tree to increase airflow through the canopy, which promotes more rapid drying of the foliage. However, even these practices only offer marginal control of the disease.

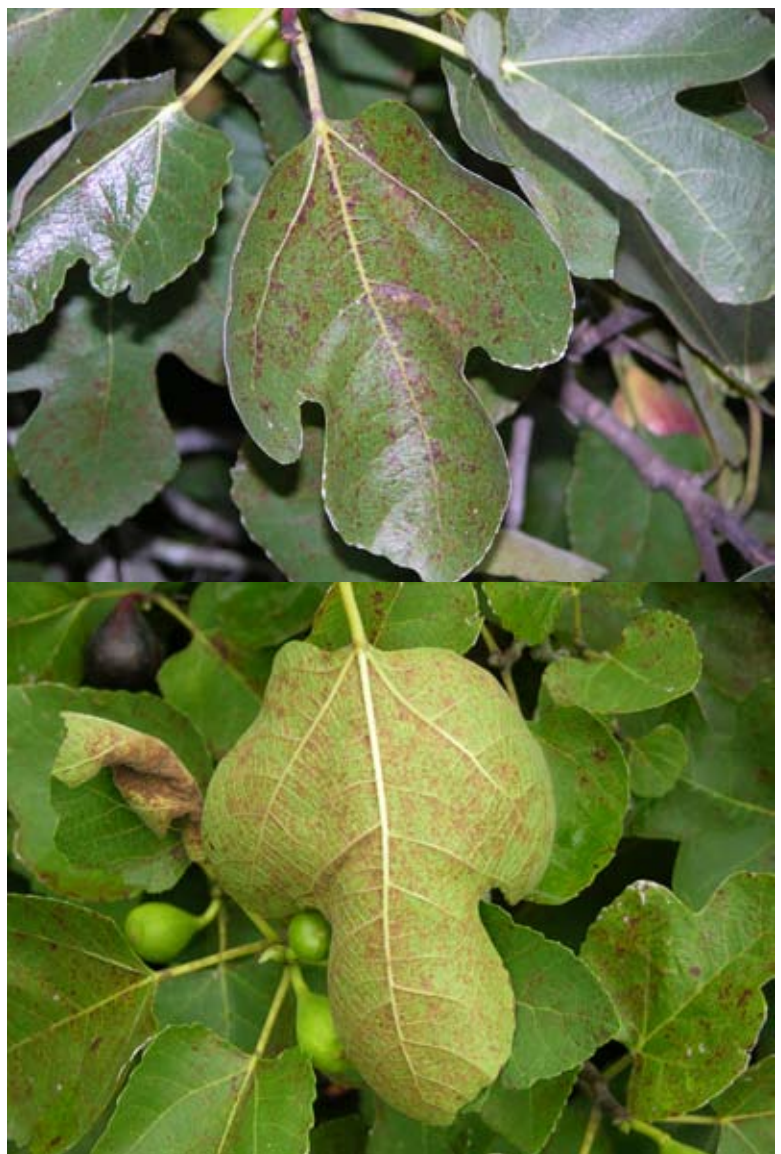


Fig. 1. Symptoms of fig rust as seen on the upper and lower leaf surfaces.

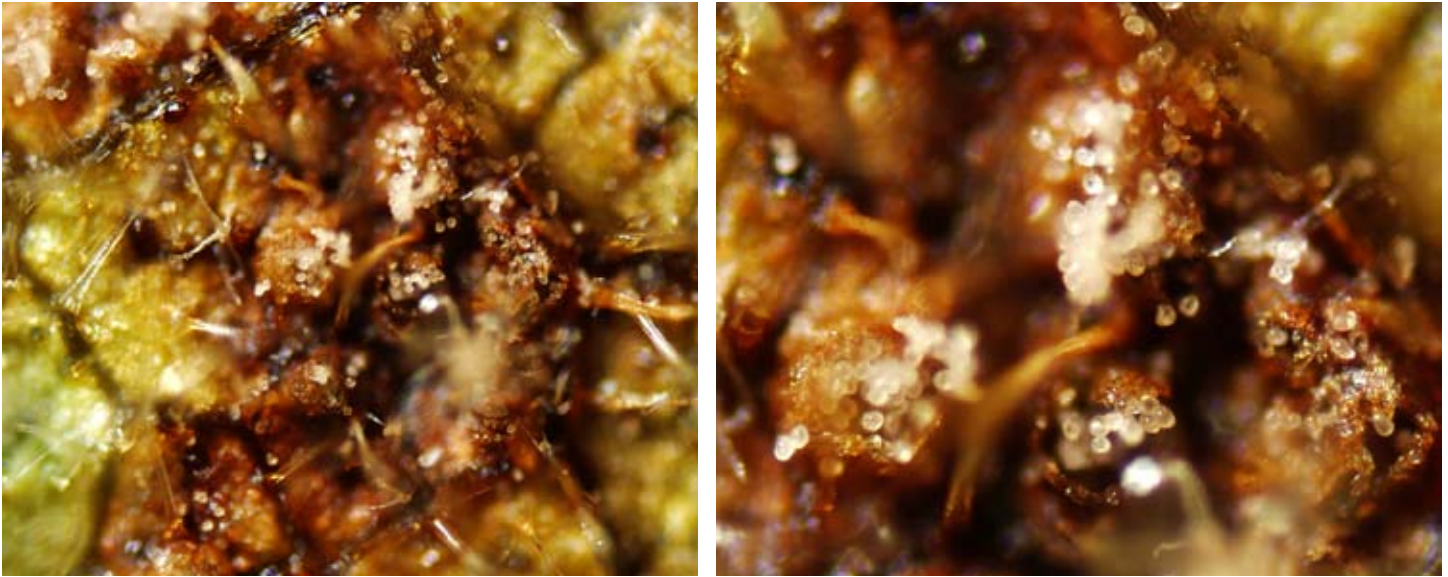


Fig. 2. Fig rust urediniospores produced on the lower leaf surface as seen with a microscope.

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Authors

Don Ferrin, Ph.D., Professor
Charles Overstreet, Ph.D., Professor
Department of Plant Pathology and
Crop Physiology

Photo Credit

Don Ferrin

Louisiana State University Agricultural Center

William B. Richardson, Chancellor

Louisiana Agricultural Experiment Station

David J. Boethel, Vice Chancellor and Director

Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service

Paul D. Coreil, Vice Chancellor and Director

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