

CERCOSPORA LEAF SPOT OF POMEGRANATE

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Pomegranate, *Punica granatum* L., was called the 'Apple of Carthage'. It is a small tree or shrub, and is native from the Mediterranean region to the Himalayas. Through long cultivation, it is now widely distributed in tropical and subtropical areas of the world. The pomegranate is grown in the northern United States as a greenhouse or indoor plant, and in the South for its ornamental value and edible fruit. Only one genus and 2 species make up the entire family Punicaceae (3).

Nearly all of the commercial pomegranates (2600 acres) in the United States are grown in the hot, dry, climate of the Central Valley of California. Because of this climate, the plants are grown relatively pest-free except for mites, mealybugs, and leafrollers (personal communication with Dr. Carl W. Nichols, Plant Pathologist, California Department of Food and Agriculture).

Cercospora leaf spot of pomegranate is caused by the fungus *Cercospora punicae* P. Henn. (5) and has been reported from Florida to Mississippi and Texas (12), Africa (11), Mauritius (2), the Dominican Republic (6), Bermuda (7), India (1,9, 10), Taiwan (14), Iran (8), Egypt (4), and Brazil, Puerto Rico, and Japan (5). Wolf (13) considers *C. punicae* to be identical to *C. lythracearum* Heald & Wolf to which has also been ascribed the perfect stage *Mycosphaerella lythracearum* F. A. Wolf. However, Chupp (5) does not concur in this view. Moreover, this *Cercospora* has been reported as a serious pathogen, causing crop failures of pomegranate in Bermuda (7).

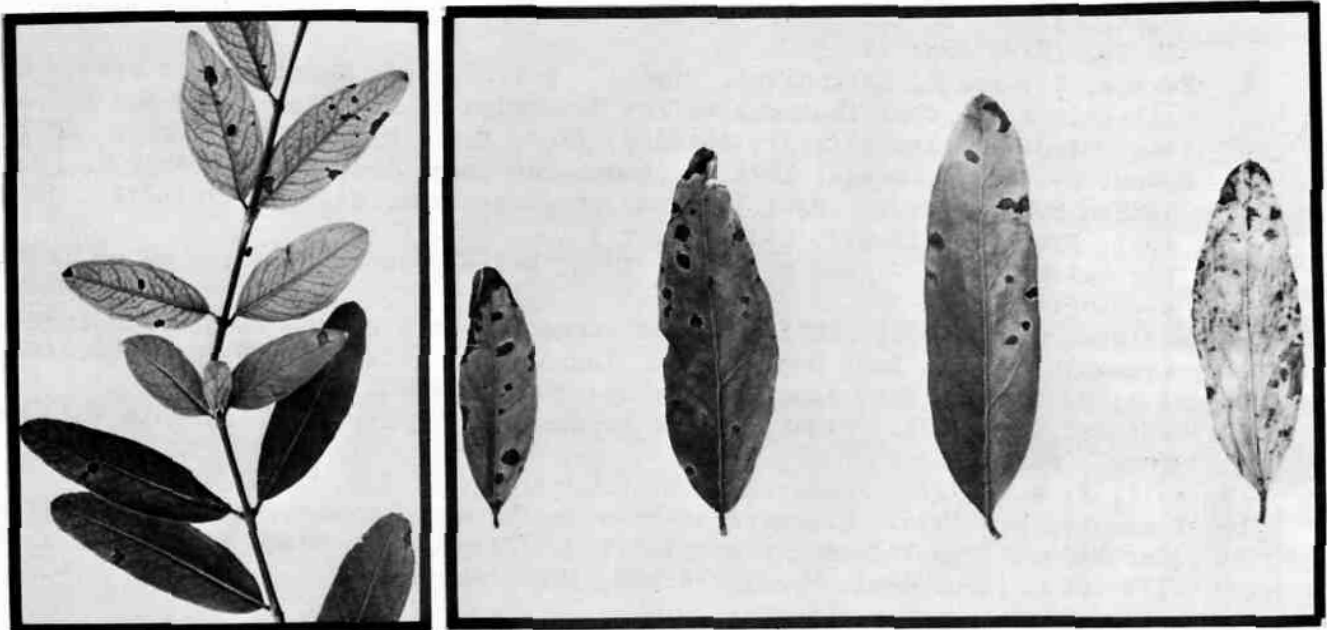


Fig. 1. Cercospora leaf spot of pomegranate

SYMPTOMS. Leaf spots (fig. 1) are circular to somewhat angular, dark reddish brown to almost black with a diffuse yellow halo and from 0.5 to 5 mm in diameter (5,13). Lesions may coalesce but usually do not. Spotted leaves become pale green, turn yellow, and abscise. When fruits are infected, producing the condition known as pomegranate blotch, the spots are small but conspicuous dark brown lesions which are circular initially, then become irregular as coalescence occurs (13).

CONTROL. The use of a copper fungicide was reported to provide good control of *Cercospora* leaf spot of pomegranate in Bermuda (Dr. E.L.H. Wang, personal communication).

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