

CITRUS BIOSECURITY THREAT: Post Bloom Fruit Drop (PFD)

Symptoms

The first symptoms may appear two to seven days after infection. Initially, peach to orange-coloured lesions are formed on the petals of open flowers (floral rot or blossom blight), later turning reddish-brown and necrotic. Although unopened and even pinhead flower buds may be affected, petals on open flowers are more susceptible to infection. Whole flower clusters may be infected, resulting in entire branches with orange to brown petals clinging to inflorescences.

Flowers affected by PFD start developing into yellowish fruitlets, but fruit development ceases prematurely. The fruitlets abscise, and the remaining calyces and floral disks, commonly called buttons, persist on the twigs for the life of the twig. These persistent buttons are uniquely characteristic to the disease and are not known to be produced by any other disorder. Leaves surrounding infected inflorescences are usually twisted and distorted, with twisted laminae and enlarged veins.



Fundecitrus

Peach to orange-coloured lesions
on flower petals



Fundecitrus

Affected yellowish fruitlets



Fundecitrus

Abscission of fruitlets and retention
of the calyces and floral disks,
leaving the "buttons"

The disease

- *Colletotrichum abscisum*, belonging to the *Colletotrichum acutatum* complex, is the causal agent of PFD.
- PFD is a destructive disease of citrus and causes damage to blossoms (floral rot or blossom blight) and increases post-bloom fruit drop.
- The disease results in up to 80% early fruit drop in favourable climatic conditions.
- PFD is very difficult to control.



Host range

- All *Citrus* spp.

Current distribution

- Brazil
- USA

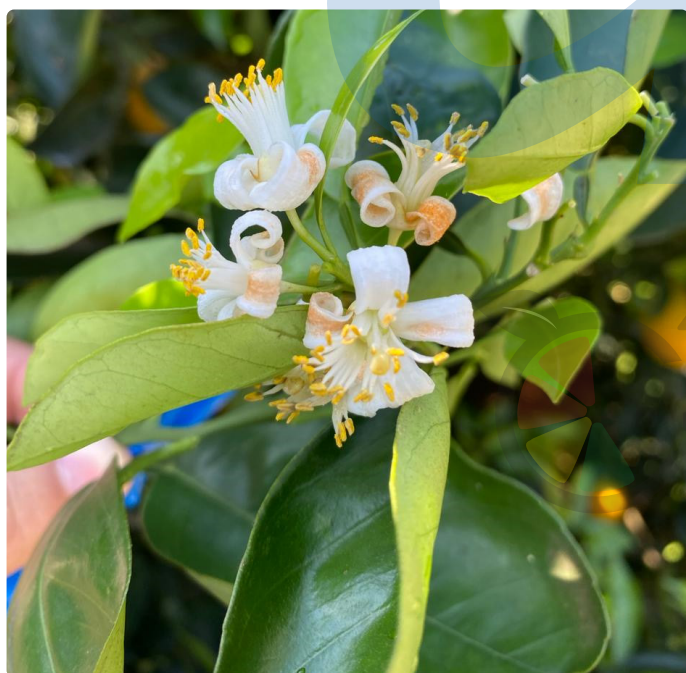


Method of spread

- **Infected plant propagation material**
Citrus propagation material (trees, cuttings, grafts, budwood, rootstocks)
- **Airborne spores are wind dispersed from infected tissue**

Preventative actions

- Quarantine procedures for importation of citrus propagation material
- Plant certified disease-free citrus trees
- Awareness and surveillance to ensure early detection and rapid implementation of control measures
- Do not bring illegal plant material into South Africa and onto your farm!



For more information on this disease, or if you find anything unusual, contact Wayne Kirkman from CRI's Biosecurity Division: waynek@cri.co.za, 084 458 0349

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