

Daylily Leaf Streak

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If you have daylilies there is a chance that they might look a little ragged right now. I have seen quite a few plantings in the Miami Valley that look really bad right now, including my own.

The flowers are actually beautiful but the foliage is completely ragged on some varieties while on others, it looks ok.

Plant Pathologist Nancy Taylor, the Director of the C. Wayne Ellet Plant and Pest Diagnostic Clinic confirmed daylily leaf streak on a sample that I sent to the Clinic last week.

This is a common disease of daylilies but I have never seen it this bad.

The fungus causes the leaves to turn yellow and then brown. Initially the tips turn yellow. As the disease progresses, the yellowing spreads down along the leaf, usually in the middle and then outward.

The good news is that this pathogen is more of a cosmetic problem than anything. It won't kill the plant; it just makes the foliage look really bad.

If you have several different varieties of daylilies in your gardens you may notice that some look worse than others. I have one variety that is absolutely awful and a few other varieties that just have a couple of leaves showing symptoms.

This is due to the variability in susceptibility to the leaf streak fungus. Some get it worse than others.

You can take your time and cut off the damaged foliage or do nothing. It depends on your tolerance level.

In my garden, I will cut the variety with the most damage completely back to the ground when it finishes blooming. The foliage will re-grow and there is a good chance that it won't be affected by the disease. This all depends on weather conditions when the new growth appears.

The disease is most common in warm wet weather which means we have had the perfect weather conditions for this to develop.

If you are going to remove leaves or cut them back completely, don't put them in the compost pile if you are going to use the compost in your beds. Chances are you may not heat the compost enough to kill the pathogen.

Don't allow the foliage to overwinter on the ground as this will be a source of infection for next season.

In the meantime, enjoy your daylilies. The flowers aren't affected and still look and taste good.

Yes, I said taste! Try them. The flower petals are edible and actually quite good. I have found that different varieties have a different taste.

I tried one variety last year and it reminded me of buttered popcorn. They really are quite tasty.