

My blackberries are ripening unevenly

Is this redberry mite?

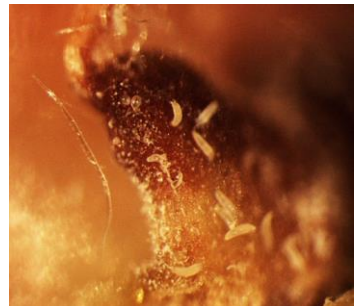
Test 1: Fruit press check

Press red drupelets gently with a fingernail, if they are soft then this is not redberry mite. If they are hard, this is typically redberry mite. Check for a definite boundary between red and black drupelets. The fruit pictured at right grades from red to black and the red drupelets are soft indicating a cause other than redberry mite, possibly environmental.



Test 2: Hand lens check

Snip off some fruit with symptoms, collecting the calyx (leafy top) as well. First look at this with a good hand lens (20 X magnification). You may be able to see very small redberry mite, particularly around the calyx. If you can't find any, go to test 3.



Test 3: Ripening check

Place unevenly ripening fruit in a warm place (on your desk at room temperature is good). Observe for 2 to 3 days to see if red drupelets begin to turn black. If they eventually ripen, this is not redberry mite, check for other possible causes. Environmental conditions may cause uneven ripening.



Test 4: Under the microscope

Collect around 30 fruit from an affected row or tunnel. Snip the fruit off with secateurs or snips so that you collect the calyx (leafy part of fruit) as well. Place a fruit in a thimble full (around 2 ml) of one of the following solutions and 'swizzle' around for a couple of minutes.

- 70% ethanol – (some hand sanitisers are 70% alcohol)
- Diluted methylated spirits
- Dilute bleach & water
- Detergent & water

Tip the solution into a small clear container and place on a black background or a black dish. Look for redberry mite with a good dissecting microscope (20 to 60 X magnification)



Symptom checker – is it redberry mite?



Typical redberry mite symptoms on 'Chester' blackberry



Sunscald



Physiological - thought to be due to extreme environment (high temperature and humidity)



Poor pollination



Sucking bug damage

