

## Botrytis blight and fruit rot – *Botrytis cinerea*

Botrytis blight and fruit rot is a minor disease in most blueberry-growing regions, but sometimes causes serious damage. Economic losses are mostly due to blossom blight and fruit rot.

**Symptoms** On leaves, tan brown, irregular lesions develop that sometimes distort leaves. Blighted blossoms turn brown and soon become covered with abundant gray mold growth. Infected twigs are first brown to black and later become tan to gray. Developing berries can also become infected, but fruit rot usually does not develop until after harvest. Infected berries become covered with a fluffy gray mold.

**Biology of the pathogen** The fungus overwinters as mycelium or hard black mycelial masses (sclerotia) on infected plant material. In spring, numerous airborne spores develop on plant debris and sclerotia. The fungus infects tender green twigs, blossoms, leaves, and fruit. Older plant parts are rarely attacked. Cool to moderate (15-20°C) weather and frequent rains favor disease development.

**Management** Remove infected plant material; reduce humidity in the canopy, apply effective fungicides, particularly during bloom and fruit ripening; avoid excessive use of nitrogen fertilizer in the spring; cool berries rapidly after harvest.

