

Leaf blight of cocoyam (taro)

Phytophthora colocasiae Phytophthora leaf blight



Symptoms of leaf blight on taro foliage (photo by PlantVillage)



Symptoms of leaf blight on taro foliage (photo by PlantVillage)



Water-soaked lesion caused by taro leaf blight (photo by PlantVillage)

Prevention	Monitoring	Direct Control
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a resistant cultivar if available • Use certified, disease-free plant material • Do not move soil from a diseased field into a new field since <i>Phytophthora</i> lives in the soil • Do not plant cocoyam near infected fields since the disease can spread via wind and water • Avoid excessive levels of moisture since the disease thrives in a wet environment. Do not irrigate at night when temperatures are cool and there is less evaporation • Widely space cocoyam plants so that water can evaporate more easily from the plants (0.6-1 m x 0.6-1 m) • Rotate with crops not susceptible to the disease such as cassava, ginger, cereals (crops not in the Monitoring column) • Dip corms in bleach (1% sodium hypochlorite) and store them in polyethylene bags to reduce the incidence of rot in storage • After harvest, plough in crop debris to speed up decomposition. The pathogen only survives in the soil on infected crop residue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional relevant crops: yam, rubber, betel, dasheen, tamu, periwinkle. • Monitor crop particularly closely when conditions for this disease are optimal: night temperature of 20-22°C, day temperature 27-30°C, and rainy weather • Infection often begins on the lobes and sides of the leaf where water collects • Look out for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water-soaked purple or brown circular lesions on the leaf • Lesions become dark brown with yellow margins and irregular • Initial spots develop secondary infections. Leaf blade may collapse and die • Yellow to red fluid is produced from the centre of the spots. It forms hard pellets as it dries. This is a distinguishing feature of this disease • Lesions eventually rot • Petioles may become infected • Corms may rot post-harvest - they become leathery and firm in contrast to soft rot caused by other fungi e.g. <i>Phyllosticta colocasiae</i>. • Cut corm open to check for rot - the rot is light brown and hard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rogue infected leaves to reduce disease spread. Burn the leaves (if allowed in your area) to completely remove the source if inoculum

Note: Pesticides may be available to control this pest. Please check with the Ministry of Agriculture in your country to find out which pesticides are registered in your country and the local restrictions for their use.