

DISEASE NOTE

FIRST RECORD OF *COLLETOTRICHUM ACUTATUM* ON STRAWBERRY IN MALTA**A. Porta-Puglia and D. Mifsud**

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Strawberry (*Fragaria × ananassa* Duch.), an expanding crop in Malta, is susceptible to black spot (anthracnose) caused by *Colletotrichum acutatum* J.H. Simmonds, which has become one of the major fungal diseases of this species worldwide (Freeman *et al.*, 2001). In December 2005 a severe black spot attack was observed on strawberry 'fruits' (receptacles) grown under plastic tunnels at St Paul's Bay, Malta. *C. acutatum* was constantly isolated from fruit lesions. A conidial suspension (3.5×10^5 conidia ml⁻¹) was prepared by pouring sterile water on a 6-day-old fungal colony grown on PDA, and gently rubbing the colony surface with a glass rod. Ripening strawberry fruits of cv Ventana were washed under running water, treated for 2 min in a water solution of sodium hypochlorite (2% active Cl), then rinsed in sterile distilled water. Six fruits were inoculated by depositing on their surface two separate drops (0.05 ml) of the conidial suspension and six fruits (controls) were treated in the same way with sterile water previously poured on a sterile PDA plate. The fruits were kept under high moisture conditions, covered with plastic bags in an air-conditioned room (20±2°C). Typical anthracnose symptoms appeared on the inoculated receptacles within 7-10 days. *C. acutatum* was re-isolated from all the inoculated fruits. No symptoms developed on the controls and attempts to isolate the pathogen failed. This is the first record of *C. acutatum* on strawberry in Malta. The epidemiology of *C. acutatum* on strawberry and other plant species, on which it could show either pathogenic or non-pathogenic lifestyles (Peres *et al.*, 2005), should be investigated in the Maltese environment.

Freeman S., Horowitz S., Sharon A., 2001. Pathogenic and nonpathogenic lifestyles in *Colletotrichum acutatum* from strawberry and other plants. *Phytopathology* **91**: 986-992.

Peres N.A., Timmer L.W., Adaskaveg J.E., Correll J.C., 2005. Lifestyles of *Colletotrichum acutatum*. *Plant Disease* **89**: 784-796.

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