

## Blackberry Orange Felt

Blackberry Orange Felt or Orange Cane Blotch is caused by the alga *Cephaleuros virescens*. This organism has been reported as a pathogen of nearly 300 species of plants, causing stem spots or lesions as symptoms on 80 of these plant species. Initially whitish-yellow disk-shaped spots appear on the canes, usually more prevalent near the base of the canes. Later in the season, the spots become orange and velvety in appearance. The orange pigmentation results from the production of reddish pigments by mature spore producing structures of the alga. Under wet humid conditions, the spots often merge, nearly covering the entire cane. Orange felt may be seen on the canes from spring to fall but is more prevalent throughout summer and fall. Although the lesions themselves are superficial, they open the canes to infection by pathogenic fungi such as *Botryosphaeria*. The first line of defense in preventing or treating Orange felt is to plant only in well-drained fields. Old floricanes should be removed immediately after harvest. Blackberries planted on plastic with drip irrigation have been shown to have fewer problems with Orange felt. Since stressed plants are more susceptible to infection, care should be taken to ensure optimum growing conditions, with attention paid to pH and nutrients. Copper fungicides have been known to provide some control. Read labels carefully.

