

SEPTORIA LEAF SPOT OF SAPODILLA

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The sapodilla or chewing gum tree, Manilkara zapota (L.) Van Royen, previously known as Achras zapota L., Manilkara zapotilla (Jacq.) Gilly, Sapota achras Mill., and Sapota zapotilla Coville, belongs to the family Sapotaceae (1, 3-6). The tree is an ornamental evergreen attaining a height of 50 feet or more, and is usually propagated by seeds (1,4,6). This species is of interest not only because of its edible fruits, but also because the bark contains a milky latex known commercially as chicle, a principal ingredient of chewing gum before synthetic substitutes were developed (1-5).

DISTRIBUTION: The sapodilla is native to Yucatan and Central America and is widely cultivated in the tropics. From its native home it has been carried around the world. It is grown on the western coast of India and in Bengal. It was one of the first fruits brought into southern Florida from the Bahama Islands by early settlers, and is well adapted to conditions in the Florida Keys (1-6).

SYMPTOMS. One of the very few disease problems affecting sapodilla in southern Florida is a foliar spot condition. The leaf spots are irregular in shape, up to 10 mm across and may coalesce (Fig. 1). The lesions are brown with dark borders. Darkened lateral veins may extend outside the lesions (Fig. 2).



Fig. 1. Septoria leaf spots on upper (right) and lower (left) surfaces X0.6. (DPI Photo by Jeffrey W. Lotz).

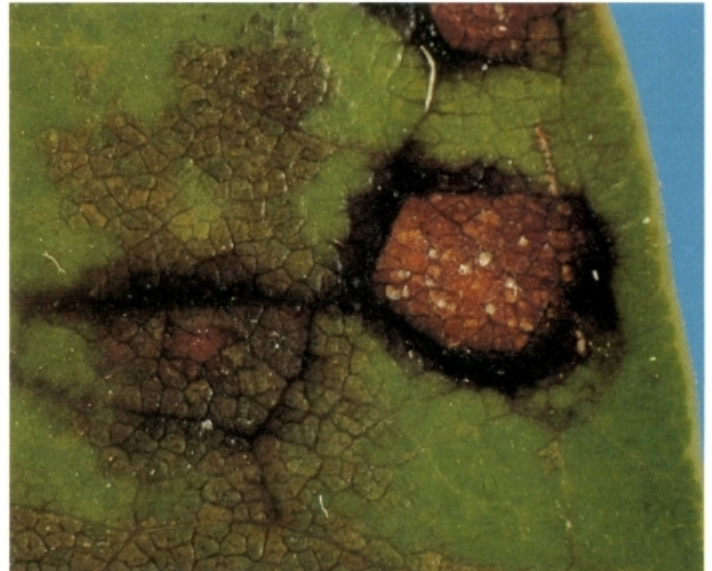


Fig. 2. Magnified view of a leaf spot showing a darkened lateral vein extending outside the lesion. (DPI Photo by Jeffrey W. Lotz).

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CAUSAL AGENT. An unidentified fungus species of the genus *Septoria* is the cause of the leaf spots in southern Florida. It is considered of moderate importance as a foliar spotting pathogen. This fungus forms pycnidia (fruiting bodies) in the necrotic lesions. Pycnidia appear on the upper leaf surface partly embedded in the leaf tissue, and have a wide ostiole through which conidia are extruded in tendrils.

SURVEY AND DETECTION. Look for brown necrotic leaf spots with dark borders and darkened lateral veins extending outside the lesions.

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