

Plum (Ornamental & Fruiting)

(Prunus spp.)

Plum trees—both fruiting and flowering types—are widely planted in Colorado for their **spring blossoms**, **purple foliage (ornamental types)**, and **sweet fruit**. However, plums are **high-maintenance** in this region and susceptible to **borers**, **cankers**, **leaf spot**, **aphids**, **scale**, **tent caterpillars**, and **environmental stress**.



Seasonal Pest & Disease Calendar

Icons: 🌸 Spring | ☀️ Summer | 🍂 Fall | ❄️ Winter

| Problem | Type | Active Season | Icons |
|--|-----------------|---------------|-------|
| Cytospora / bacterial canker (major issue) | Fungus/Bacteria | Spring–Fall | 🌸☀️🍂 |
| Borers (peach tree borer, shot-hole borer, flatheaded) | Insect/borer | Summer | ☀️ |
| Aphids | Insect | Spring–Fall | 🌸☀️🍂 |

| <u>Problem</u> | <u>Type</u> | <u>Active Season</u> | <u>Icons</u> |
|---|-------------|-------------------------------------|--------------|
| Scale insects | Insect | Spring crawlers; visible year-round | 🌸 ❄️ |
| Leaf spot / shot hole disease (Coryneum blight) | Fungus | Spring–Summer | 🌸 🌻 |
| Brown rot (fruiting plums) | Fungus | Summer–Fall | 🌻 🍂 |
| Tent caterpillars | Insect | Spring–Early Summer | 🌸 🌻 |
| Environmental stress (heat/drought/alkaline soil) | Abiotic | Summer–Fall | 🌻 🍂 |

Pest & Disease Guide (Homeowner-Friendly)

| <u>Problem</u> | <u>Common Symptoms</u> | <u>Treatment & Management</u> |
|---|---|--|
| Cytospora / Bacterial Canker (Very Common & Serious) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amber gum oozing • Sunken bark lesions • Branch dieback • Bloom loss | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prune infected limbs in late winter only • Sanitize tools • Improve vigor—no chemical cure • Avoid pruning during bloom or wet weather |
| Borers (Peach Tree Borer, Flatheaded Borer, Shot-hole Borer) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sawdust-like frass at trunk • Gummosis (sap blobs) • Exit holes • Limb dieback | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent trunk injury • Deep watering in drought • Professional preventive trunk sprays in summer • Remove severely infested trees |

| <u>Problem</u> | <u>Common Symptoms</u> | <u>Treatment & Management</u> |
|---|--|--|
| Aphids | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sticky honeydew • Sooty mold • Leaf curling • Fruit deformities on edible plums | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hose-rinse foliage • Encourage lady beetles • Apply systemic treatment if severe |
| Scale | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard bumps on twigs • Honeydew & black sooty mold • Thinning canopy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dormant oil in late winter • Treat crawler stage in late spring • Prune heavily infested twigs |
| Leaf Spot / Shot Hole (Coryneum) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small brown lesions • Spots dry and fall out → “shot hole” leaves • Early defoliation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove infected leaves • Avoid overhead irrigation • Preventive fungicide during bud break in severe years |
| Brown Rot (Common in Fruiting Plums) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fruit rot • Tan mold spores • Blossom blight | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove mummified fruit • Thin fruit for airflow • Preventive fungicide for heavy fruiting years |
| Tent Caterpillars | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Silk nests • Chewed foliage • Defoliation in patches | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove nests early • Treat professionally if widespread |
| Environmental Stress | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaf scorch • Early yellowing • Sparse canopy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deep water every 2–3 weeks • Mulch 2–4" deep • Avoid planting in high-heat or compacted soil sites |

When to Worry vs. When It's Cosmetic

 **When to Worry (action recommended)**

- Amber sap dripping from multiple wounds (possible canker)
- Gummy frass and holes at base or limbs (**borers**)
- Large portions of canopy defoliating by mid-summer
- Fruit rot spreading quickly (poor airflow or wet conditions)
- Multiple dead branches each year
- Progressive decline in alkaline or compacted soil

Plum trees in Colorado often struggle without **consistent irrigation and careful pruning**.

● **Mostly Cosmetic (monitor only)**

- Light shot hole spotting
- Minor aphid honeydew or small colonies
- Occasional mildew in late summer
- A few tent caterpillar nests removed early
- Early fall color during drought

These usually resolve with **proper watering, cleanup, and airflow improvements**.