

CERCOSPORA LEAF SPOT DISEASE OF BANYAN

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A few plants of banyan (*Ficus bengalensis* L.) growing in the campus area of the University of Agriculture, Faisalabad were found suffering from a leaf spot disease. The disease was most prevalent on comparatively older foliage on the lower branches of the tree while foliage on the upper branches was sparsely diseased. The symptoms of the disease consisted of scattered necrotic lesions (leaf spots) of variable sizes, ranging from 5-12 mm in diameter, with angular margin delimited by leaf veins. The lesions on the upper surface of foliage were dark-brown, while on lower surface they appeared as tan-brown, with dark-brown margin. The lesions were also surrounded by yellow halos around them. On leaves with advanced stage of the disease, the lesions joined together to form large blighted areas and such leaves could drop off prematurely.

The causal organism associated with banyan leaf spot disease was found to be *Cercospora ficina* Tharp., which sporulated abundantly on the necrotic tissue of the foliage. The conidiophores of the fungus were dark and simple, protruding out of foliage tissue in clusters; conidia were several celled measuring 18-47 μ in length and 2-3 μ in width at X 1250 magnification. However, the average conidial size was 35 x 2.5 μ (length x width). Though the fungus has been recorded on *Ficus carica* and *F. religiosa* (Khan and Kamal, 1983, 1988); Jaffar and Qureshi, 1978), it is a new record on *Ficus bengalensis* at Faisalabad, describing symptoms of the disease.

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