Under favorable conditions of temperature and moisture, camellia flower or blossom blight caused by the fungus Sclerotinia camelliae will ruin the blooms. The disease affects both Camellia japonica and C. sasangua.

SYMPTOMS: Infection of the individual flower by the blight organism may take place soon after the tips of petals are visible in the opening bud or at any time thereafter. Few to many, small, irregular, brownish specks appear on the petals of expanding flowers (Fig. 1). Eventually the whole flower becomes uniformly dull brown and drops from the plant. When infection begins near the base of the petals the entire center of the flower may be killed, while the tips of the petals retain their normal form and color.

There is no rapid disintegration of invaded tissues and infected flowers retain their shape and firmness for many days after they turn completely brown and fall to the ground. While the flowers are resting on the wet earth, shiny black streaks (masses of spores) are often produced on the petals, giving the appearance of a wet rot. After the flower is completely blighted the causal fungus continues to develop within the basal parts of the petals, but soon grows beyond the petal limits to form hard, dark-brown to black sclerotia on the soil surface. These sclerotia are hard and durable and they will remain viable in the soil for at least 2 years. During the period from late January through April, the sclerotia will germinate to produce small saucer-like structures on the end of slender stalks (Fig. 2). Many microscopic spores (seeds of the fungus) are produced in these saucer-like structures. Wind currents distribute these spores to the camellia.
flowers. All infections originate in this manner. No secondary, flower-to-
flower infection stage is known.

CONTROL: Gather and destroy all fallen flowers. This may have to be done for at
least 2 consecutive seasons because the sclerotia remain alive in the soil for at
least 2 years and probably longer.

Trade and brand names are used only for the purpose of information and the Virginia Cooperative Extension Service does not
guarantee nor warrant the standard of the product, nor does it imply approval of the product to the exclusion of others which
may also be suitable.

KEYS TO PROPER USE OF PESTICIDES

1. Read the label on each pesticide container before each use. Follow instructions to the letter; heed all cautions and warn-
ings, and note precautions about residues.
2. Keep pesticides in the containers in which you bought them. Put them where children or animals cannot get to them, pre-
ferably under lock and away from food, feed, seed, or other material that may become harmful if contaminated.
3. Dispose of empty containers in the manner specified on the label. If disposal instructions are not printed on the label,
burn the containers where smoke will not be a hazard, or bury them at least 18" deep in a place where water supplies will
not be contaminated.

SEE YOUR DOCTOR IF SYMPTOMS OF ILLNESS OCCUR DURING OR AFTER USE OF PESTICIDES.