WHAT IS TISSUE PROLIFERATION?

Rhododendron Tissue Proliferation (TP) is a condition that causes tumor-like growths and shoots to form at the base of many cultivars of Rhododendron. The majority of susceptible cultivars are elepidotes, but some lepidote and Azalea cultivars can be affected. It can also affect Kalmia latifolia, mountain laurel.

IDENTIFICATION:

TP can first be noticed in young plants as an area of hard swollen tissue growing near or below the soil line (Figure 1). Early symptoms can look similar to crown gall caused by the bacterium Agrobacterium tumefaciens (Figure 2); however, true crown gall of Rhododendron typically occurs at stem junctions on the aerial branches, rather than at the crown.

Later, the tissue swelling will start to differentiate into small shoots appearing at the base of the plant (Figure 3). These may be found entirely below the soil line and require some digging to identify. These are a telltale sign of TP, as gall-forming pathogens of Rhododendron are not known to form organized sprouts at the base of the plant. In older plants, TP may appear as small to normal-sized shoots originating from the base of the plant.
Rhododendron Tissue Proliferation L.R. Triplett
The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (www.ct.gov/caes)