Diseases Caused by Fungi and Fungus-Like Organisms

First Report of *Neoscytalidium dimidiatum* Causing Fruit Rot on Guava (*Psidium guajava*) in Malaysia

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Funding: This study was funded by Putra Grant from the University Putra Malaysia (UPM) (grant no. 9675300). Plant Dis. 105:220, 2021; published online as <https://doi.org/10.1094/PDIS-06-20-1267-PDN>. Accepted for publication 30 July 2020.

Guava (*Psidium guajava* L.) is an economically important fruit crop in Malaysia with annual production of 67,087 tons in 2018 (FAO 2018). In February 2019, fruit rot symptoms were observed postharvest on approximately 30% of guava cultivar Lohan collected from a commercial orchard in the Rawang district (3°23'22.8"N, 101°26'55.7"E) of Selangor province, Malaysia. Symptoms on the fruits appeared as small, circular brown spots (ranging from 5 to 20 mm in diameter) that coalesced and rapidly expanded to cover the entire fruit. Severely infected fruits became soft and rotted. Ten diseased guava fruits were collected from the sampling location. Small pieces (5 × 5 × 5 mm) of symptomatic fruit tissues were excised from the lesion margin, surface sterilized with 0.5% NaOCl for 1 min, rinsed twice with sterile distilled water, plated on potato dextrose agar (PDA), and incubated at 25°C for 5 days. A *Scytalidium*-like fungus was consistently isolated from symptomatic tissues on PDA after 4 days. For morphological identification, single-spore cultures were grown on PDA at 25°C, and a representative isolate (LB1) was characterized further. The fungal colonies were initially white and powdery, and they later turned grayish-black with the onset of sporulation. The mycelia were branched with septa, pigmented, and brown in color. Fungal colonies produced dark-brown arthroconidia with thick-walled, had 0 to 1 septa, averaged 9 × 5 µm ($n = 20$), and were cylindrical to oblong in shape. For molecular identification, genomic DNA was extracted from fresh mycelium of isolate LB1 using a DNeasy Plant Mini kit (Qiagen, Germantown, MD). The

internal transcribed spacer (ITS) region of rDNA and translation elongation factor 1- α (TEF1- α) gene were amplified using ITS5/ITS4 (White et al. 1990) and EF1-728F/EF1-986R primer sets (Carbone and Kohn 1999), respectively. Both ITS (954-bp) and TEF1- α (412-bp) sequences exhibited 100% identity to *Neoscytalidium dimidiatum* with GenBank accession numbers FM211432 and MK495414, respectively. The resulting sequences were deposited in GenBank (ITS, accession no. MT565490; TEF1- α , accession no. MT572846). Based on the morphological and molecular data, the pathogen was identified as *N. dimidiatum* (Penz.) Crous & Slippers (Crous et al. 2006). A pathogenicity test was conducted on five healthy detached mature guava fruits cultivar Lohan by wound inoculating using a sterile needle and pipetting 10 µl of a conidial suspension (1×10^6 conidia/ml) of isolate LB1 to the wound. Five additional fruits were wounded and pipetted with 10 µl of sterile distilled water to serve as controls. Inoculated fruits were placed in a sterilized plastic container and incubated at 25 ± 1°C, 90% relative humidity, with a photoperiod of 12 h, and the experiment was conducted twice. All inoculated fruits developed symptoms as described above 4 to 7 days postinoculation, whereas the control fruits remained asymptomatic. *N. dimidiatum* was reisolated from all symptomatic tissues, confirming Koch's postulates. *N. dimidiatum* has been reported causing brown spot disease on pitaya (Lan et al. 2012) and stem canker on dragon fruit in Malaysia and Florida (Mohd et al. 2013; Sanahuja et al. 2016), but this is the first report of *N. dimidiatum* causing postharvest fruit rot on guava in Malaysia. This disease can cause significant postharvest losses to guava production, which could lower marketable yield, and proper control strategies should be implemented.

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The author(s) declare no conflict of interest.

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Keywords: fruit rot, *Neoscytalidium dimidiatum*, guava

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