Due to our recent cool nights and foggy mornings, downy mildew (*Plasmopara viburni*) has exploded in the Vineyards Community. There were scattered, 50 foot stretches of defoliated hedges with 80% defoliation, very impressive! Check your hedges as some hedges looked fine from a 20 foot distance, but upon closer inspection, the leaf spots could be seen.
Stressed Awabuki (commonly referred to as mirror-leaf viburnum) is a variety of sweet viburnum (Viburnum odoratissimum awabuki). This species can be recognized by the green pepper fragrance when you crush its leaves, besides the big dark green shiny leaves. During the winter it will move in on weak plants and cause spotting (light green to reddish-brown), yellowing and defoliation. This is a minor disease usually, but it has caused extensive defoliation. Once the hotter days of late spring arrive, the disease tends to dissipate. Key point in control is removal of fallen infected leaves. Get those out of your landscape and do not compost! Good luck! Make sure the sprinkler system is not directly hitting the foliage as the water will disperse the spores and the disease will consume more of your hedge.

If you feel you need to apply a fungicide, use products labeled for ornamentals. I sent Dr. Aaron Palmateer (IFAS-UF Homestead Research and Education Center) an email a few hours ago. He confirmed from the pictures that it was downy mildew and he recommend any one of the following:

Aliette WDG 3.5 lb/100 gallons of water
Heritage 3 oz./100 gallons of water
Insignia 6 oz./100 gallons of water

It may be too late to save some of these hedges from defoliation. In the future it would be wise to make note of where these outbreaks are and when (if) we have these cool, foggy late February- early March mornings, be ready to go with the fungicides. This is a hard situation to predict and hence a tough disease to manage.

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