Black blight and Ants

Recognize the problem
Black blight makes plants look unattractive so you cannot sell them. It can also hinders their growth by blocking sunlight from shining on the leaves. Stinging ants can give an unpleasant sting that might itch for several hours.

Background
Black blight does not damage the plant leaf directly. It is a fungus (disease) which grows on sugary fluids (called honeydew) produced by sucking insect pests feeding on the plant. These pests, which include scales, whiteflies, aphids, mealybugs and thrips, suck sap from the leaf. In addition, stinging ants feed on the honeydew and can sting you. Therefore, to get rid of the blight and the ants it is also necessary to remove the sucking pests.

Management
Black blight and the associated ants can be controlled by spraying plants with either a systemic or a contact insecticide. An example of a systemic insecticide (one which moves into the leaf and moves around the plant) is Acetamaprid, applied at the rate of half a teaspoon per gallon of water, every 2 weeks. Alternatively, you can use a soap solution (2 teaspoons of any dishwashing liquid per gallon of water) but you must make sure that the soap solution is directly applied to the sucking pests. Spray the pests with soap solution until it begins to run off the under sides of the leaves and repeat the spray twice each week, four to five days between sprayings until the problem is solved.

Killing the insects will reduce the honeydew and so the fungus and the ants will no longer be a problem.

When using a pesticide, always wear protective clothing and follow the instructions on the product label, such as dosage, timing of application, and pre-harvest interval.