

Common Tree Diseases



Tree diseases happen every year. While many are just unsightly, some can be detrimental to the tree in a very short amount of time.

Anthracnose

Anthracnose is a very common tree disease that often affects ash, maple, dogwood and oak in our area. While we usually see the effects of anthracnose in early summer, the fungal spores are active in the spring when cool wet weather is common. Symptoms of this leaf disease is brown lesions on the leaf which will often cause them to be distorted. The entire leaf may eventually brown and die. Leaf drop in mid summer is often caused by anthracnose. Typically, this will not kill the tree, but if there is repeated occurrences it can decrease the health of the tree. Cleaning up leaves and branches in the fall is good prevention. There is no cure, but it can be chemically prevented by using a labeled fungicide at leaf bud break.

Verticillium Wilt

Verticillium wilt is a very common soil borne disease found in many types of plants especially common in maple, linden, lilac and elm trees. Branches of the infected tree will suddenly wilt and die. It may be on one half of the tree or scattered throughout the tree. Peeling away the bark will show brown and green stained sapwood. There is no cure for this disease, and eventually the tree will die. To protect other plants from becoming infected remove the tree and all shavings from grinding out the trunk. Do not plant any plant that is susceptible to verticillium wilt in the same location as an infected plant.



Rhizosphaera (needle cast)

Rhizosphaera is a very common needle disease found in spruce, especially blue spruce. The needles of the tree will turn a lavender color and upon examination rows of black spores can be found along the middle of the needle. Needles will fall off leaving the branches bare. Apply a labeled fungicide in the spring when the new growth is 1" long and again 3 weeks later, repeating 1 to 2 more times.

Stigmina needle blight

Stigmina is very similar to Rhizosphaera, but needles turn yellow to brown and fall off the following spring. Chemical treatment is the same as Rhizosphaera; however, some professionals will suggest spraying through mid summer. Fungicide applications should be repeated yearly for at least 3 years, or longer if the area has heavy infestations.

Photo Credit: Bailey Nursery