



Bacterial Canker

Bacterial Canker is a serious but common disease caused by two related species of bacteria (*Pseudomonas syringae* pv. *mors-prunorum* and *Pseudomonas syringae* pv) and affects all stone fruits (plums, gages, damsons, cherries, peaches, nectarines, apricots and sweet almonds). Trees are particularly susceptible during their early years before cropping. Infection is most likely to occur during the autumn and winter when bacterial spores carry in wet and windy weather infecting leaf scars and pruning wounds. The first signs of Bacterial Canker however are not normally noticed until spring/early summer.



DAMAGE

Sunken areas with elongated, flattened cankers that ooze sticky gum appear on the bark and affected branches die back. Leaves on these branches either do not develop or are small and yellow and soon die. If cankers occur on a main stem of the tree, the entire tree will probably die. During the summer months, the organism infects the leaves and sometimes the shoots. Round brown spots appear on the leaves and subsequently develop into holes giving them a 'shot-holed' appearance.

Bacterial Canker can easily be confused with Gummosis, a disorder of stone fruits that usually occurs after freezing weather. The patches of gum appear on the surface of branches and trunks but with Gummosis the gum arises from healthy wood whereas with Bacterial Canker the gum oozes from diseased tissue and has a sour smell.

CONTROL

Always avoid pruning stone fruits during the winter since the wounds formed may allow the entry of the disease. Any necessary pruning or cutting back should be carried out during the summer months between May and the end of August.

Non chemical Control

Bacterial Canker must be tackled quickly in order to save the tree. Remove and burn cankered branches pruning them back into healthy wood at least 20-30cm (8-12in) from any visible damage. Wounds should be painted with a protective paint such as Growing Success 'Prune & Seal', Bayer 'Arbrex Seal & Heal' or Vitax 'Medo' which are suitable for use by organic gardeners. It is very important that the pruning tools are properly disinfected by immersing the blades in boiling water for 5-10 minutes before using them on other trees. For non organic gardeners dipping the blades in methylated spirit will also do the job. If canker occurs on the main stem, the entire tree will die. In such a case, it is necessary to uproot and burn the tree immediately to prevent the canker from spreading to other trees.

Chemical Control

Due to the withdrawal of copper based fungicides there are currently no products being manufactured to treat this disease.

USE CHEMICALS SAFELY: ALWAYS READ THE LABEL

When using chemicals it is most important to follow the manufacturer's instructions precisely. Only use on the fruits that are listed on the manufacturer's label. Chemicals can be wasted by making concentrations unnecessarily strong or by making them too weak and ineffective. Furthermore, if chemicals are too strong they may cause some damage to the foliage.