

## Fireblight



This can be a particular problem with pears but can also affect apples, crab apples and quince trees, but not stone fruits. The disease is caused by the bacterium *Erwinia amylovora* and is spread by rain splash, pollinating insects and un-sterilised pruning tools. First symptoms are normally seen between late spring and autumn.

### DAMAGE

This disease infects the flowers which become blackened and shrivelled and then spreads down the shoots causing leaves to be brown and withered as if scorched. The bark sinks inwards on young branches and if pared back a red discolouration will be noticeable on the wood. This can spread extremely rapidly. Cankers form at the base of the diseased tissue and ooze a whitish coloured liquid in the spring. The tree may show extensive dieback and be killed within a few seasons.

### CONTROL

Trees with Fireblight cannot be cured but the disease can be controlled. Affected branches should be removed or cut back to 30cm (1ft) for smaller branches, 60cm (2ft) for larger ones below the infection. If badly affected the entire tree should be removed and burnt. All prunings should be burned and tools should be sterilized between cuts by wiping them with a disinfectant such as methylated spirit or 'Jeyes Fluid' to avoid cross contamination. It is also advisable to remove late blossoms before they open. Hawthorn hedges can be a source of infection.