University of Idaho
College of Agriculture
Cooperative Extension Service
Agricultural Experiment Station

Current Information Series No. 762

Sycamore Blight

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Sycamore blight or anthracnose is the most serious disease affecting sycamores and plane trees. The disease is particularly severe in the warmer areas of Idaho. It is a common disease of the Western Sycamore, the American plane tree, London Plane tree and white oak. On sycamores the disease is most severe in spring seasons when the average mean daily temperature at the time of leafing out and the following 2 weeks is 55°F or below. The blight has occurred frequently in recent years in Idaho and is a perennial problem.

Symptoms

The disease appears as the leaves emerge from the buds in the spring. The most conspicuous symptoms are the red-brown blotches along the midrib and veins of older leaves. Defoliation from leaf blight may give trees a tattered appearance and weaken trees if it occurs year after year.

Symptoms may be confused with late spring frosts or those of leaf scorch and drought stress. Severely affected trees may drop almost all of their leaves during summer, and the value of the trees for landscaping is lost (Fig. 1).

Defoliated trees will get new leaves again during the summer, but defoliation of the trees may produce loss of growth and vigor. They may become susceptible to drought and winter injury.

A shoot blight may occur and cause sudden death of expanding shoots and young leaves. Shoots and branches are killed by girdling cankers. This results in the production of numerous small shoots that arise immediately below the girdled portion, causing a bush appearance (Fig. 2).

Cause

A fungus, *Gnomonia veneta*, is the cause of sycamore blight. It overwinters in affected buds, fallen leaves, twigs and branches. The disease is spread by masses of spores that are produced on cankers and infected leaves. These spores are spread by rain and wind to healthy leaves, buds and twigs where new infections can start.

Control

The defoliation caused by leaf blight will not result in lasting damage to the trees unless it occurs year after year. A severely infected tree may be repeatedly infected and defoliated more than once in a single season. Prune out and destroy infected twigs and branches. This may be difficult as affected twigs and branches may be small and numerous, and the trees may be too large for

Fig. 1. Red-brown blotches is a symptom of sycamore blight or anthracnose disease.

Fig. 2. Severe defoliation results from trees with leaf blight infestation. Compare the tree at left with other, more healthy trees.

extreme pruning. Tree vigor should be maintained through adequate use of fertilizer and water to stimulate the production of new foliage. If damage occurs year after year and it is sufficient to justify control, chemical fungicides may be applied to reduce disease damage. Application of pesticides requires high pressure spray equipment to reach high in tall tress. **The spray must be applied before the disease appears in the spring**, or control will not be completely effective.

Spray with the recommended fungicide when the buds are swelling and the bud caps begin to break. Apply a second application 10 days later. Several fungicides are effective including:

1. Benlate 50 W.P. — 1 lb/100 gal of water
2. Daconil 2787 75 W.P. — 1.5 lb/100 gal of water
3. Daconil 2787 4F — 2 pt/100 gal of water
4. Kocide 101 — 2 to 3 lb/100 gal of water
5. Dexol Bordeaux — 1 lb/25 qt water

Trade Names

Trade names are used in this publication to simplify the information presented. Such use does not imply endorsement of any product nor criticism of similar products that are not mentioned.

Chemical Recommendations

The chemical recommendations are based on the best information available at the time of printing. Before using any pesticide, read the instructions on the label. Follow all precautions and restrictions for safe product use.

The grower is responsible for residues on his crops. He also is responsible for drift from his property to adjacent properties or crops.

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Issued in furtherance of cooperative extension work in agriculture and home economics, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, H. R. Guenthner, Director of Cooperative Extension Service, University of Idaho, Moscow, Idaho 83843. We offer our programs and facilities to all people without regard to race, creed, color, sex or national origin.

1500 6-85

35 cents per copy