

Fire Blight

Many of our trees (apple, pear, quince, crabapple, and mountain ash) displayed signs of FIRE BLIGHT last season. Young leaves and shoots wilt and bend downward forming the shape of a hook. Black wilting resembles a burnt or scorched limb.

Fire blight will kill blossoms and shoots and cause dieback of branches from cankers.

Fire Blight is a bacterial infection of the tree. There is no cure. It will continue to multiply. However, it can be managed.

MANAGEMENT

Proper fertilization-

Avoid high nitrogen fertilizers to limit new growth.

Do not fertilize a hail damaged tree.

Irrigation-

Water around the base of the tree to avoid getting the leaves wet as water transports the bacteria.

Do not irrigate during bloom.

Keep the area around the tree free of leaf/fruit debris and weeds.

Monitor for any damaged areas that start to change color or spread.

Pruning-

Prune only in dry weather.

Delay summer pruning until the terminal bud has set and growth has ceased. Winter pruning when the tree is dormant is preferred.

Prune out infected shoots and branches at least 8-12" behind the browning area of the shoot.

Sterilize after each pruning cut with a disinfectant.

Avoid hard pruning which causes excessive growth.

Remove damaged or split fruit (dented fruit is okay).

Dispose of all infected material. (Bag to prevent spread).

Cut out cankers on branches. Winter is best. *Refer to CSU Extension fact sheet- link provided at the bottom of article.*

Fire Blight outbreak is higher due to certain weather conditions; wet conditions, heavy rain, hail, and strong winds causing wounding to our trees which allows the bacteria to enter the tree. Natural openings (flowers) are also another way for the bacteria to enter the tree.

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TREATMENT

If your tree does have fire blight SPRING is when you will treat your tree. If your tree develops fire blight during the season; Maintenance procedures are recommended until the following spring when you can treat for fire blight.

Time of spraying is crucial for treatment.

READ AND FOLLOW ALL LABEL INSTRUCTIONS.

For the homeowner Streptomycin Sulfate is available. We carry it under the brand name Ferti-Lome.

Water pH for mixing should be around 5.1-5.6 for best effectiveness.

First application at the start of blossoming period.

Repeat every 3-4 days during bloom time. DO NOT apply when fruit is visible.

Do not use this product after symptom development as it can lead to antibiotic resistance in the bacteria strain.

Copper fungicide is also available to the homeowner. Applying in dormancy or bloom stage is recommended.

Other treatments are available through a tree service company and should treat during dormancy or bloom time.

For further information refer to the CSU Fact sheet on Fire Blight 2.907

<https://extension.colostate.edu/topic-areas/yard-garden/fire-blight-2-907/>