

BACTERIAL CANKER

A very common and widespread bacterial disease of Prunus trees, including ornamental and edible cherries and plums, usually caused by *Pseudomonas syringae* pv. *morsprunorum* and *P. s. pv. Syringae*.

Symptoms:

Particularly vulnerable are cropping varieties of plum and cherry.

Spring Symptoms

Symptoms on plums tend to occur on the main stem with elongated sunken area of bark, occasionally girdling the trunk and occasionally exuding an amber coloured gum. Cherries tend to show shallow depressions on branches or in forks, almost always accompanied by the gum, with the depression sometimes enlarging and producing copious quantities. Affected branches often produce stunted, yellowing leaves before dying back completely.

Summer symptoms

Dark brown leaf spots seen in late spring merge into patches of dead material and these patches drop out leaving a 'shothole' effect.

Biology:

Rain splashed bacteria in Autumn and Winter enter the stem through pruning wounds and leaf scars. The lesions extend rapidly during early spring before declining as the bacteria die out. As the tree enters its natural growth stages through spring and into summer it has a strong resistance to this type of infection. Canker do not develop at this time but bacterial activity shifts to the foliage where more bacteria will form in the leaf spots.

Control:

To reduce the infection or chance of infection the best method is to encourage a healthy tree that will fight the infection itself, as there is no organic or chemical spray that will directly control the canker. Adopt a regular feeding and watering regime, especially with young trees, to ensure your tree is as healthy as possible.

Other things you can do to help are ensuring you have good hygiene, so clearing up all the fallen leaves and fruit in the autumn. Winter washes can be an effective way of controlling fungal spores and other overwintering pests and diseases.

Affected branches should be removed during the summer months and Arbrex Seal and Heal applied to the wounds as this will greatly reduce the likelihood of re-infection. If the canker is much worse then the only option may be to remove the tree and burn it, as it will just become a source of infection for the rest of the garden.

ALWAYS READ AND FOLLOW THE MANUFACTURERS INSTRUCTIONS WHEN USING CHEMICAL CONTROL PRODUCTS