



Tree Damage Alert No 118

AAIS • Alice Holt Lodge • Wrecclesham • Farnham • Surrey • GU10
4LH

15 June 2007

Call the Tree Helpline on: 09065 161147

Calls cost £1.50 per minute

All in a Pathologist's Garden.

It is with some trepidation that this TDA is written, as it might be assumed that all Tree Pathologists would be immune to, or able to control, disease problems in their own gardens. Alternately perhaps the Gods plot revenge on those who attempt to control the natural state of affairs where disease is a normal part of nature's cycle of growth and death.

The main problem is our old friend, Honey Fungus (*Armillaria* spp.). Its victims to date include a single Leyland cypress (*X Cupressocyparis leylandii*) in a hedge, Honeysuckle (*Lonicera* spp), flowering Cherry (*Prunus* cv Longipes) and Rhubarb! Despite these losses, it is probable that the species of *Armillaria* involved is *A. gallica* which is generally regarded as a saprophyte but which can also kill weakened trees. The rhizomorphs (boot laces) found in the vicinity of the dead plants were thick and very abundant which is the typical form associated with this species. In addition the Cherry had been weakened in previous years by heavy attacks of Blossom Wilt, caused by the fungus *Monilinia laxa* and was stressed in consequence. Another interesting feature is that although the Leyland cypress died 5 years ago none of the adjacent trees have died, nor have any of the other trees in the hedge, which again is an indication that the *Armillaria* is not highly pathogenic, and likely to be *A. gallica* – so no panic at the moment.

Blossom wilt also affected another flowering cherry, 'Kanzan', causing considerable shoot dieback. Previously this tree suffered from Kanzan Dieback, but it was not fatal and the tree

recovered. However during recent driveway reconstruction the tree had to be felled! But the stump and roots were removed as a precautionary measure against Honey Fungus.

There are four Leyland cypress hedges in the garden (all regularly trimmed to an acceptable height!) and over the years attacks by the Cypress Aphid (*Cinara cupressi*) have occurred. The degree of damage varies considerably from year-to-year and recently attacks have been only slight despite no control having been used. It is noticeable that in other hedges in the area, where damage has often been severe in the past, there has been good new growth from adjacent live branches that is now extending to obscure the brown patches of dead foliage.

On specimen trees of Bay (*Laurus nobilis*) growing in containers the Bay Sucker is a minor problem, requiring regular removal of the damaged leaves. The Bays have also been affected by scale insects which are more difficult to control. There has also been heavy infestation of Brown Scale on the Grape vines in the greenhouse.

Verticillium Wilt has affected a large, potted specimen of Japanese maple (*Acer palmatum*) but fortunately the plant survived, although with a much reduced crown, as the dead branches have been pruned out.

Perhaps this Pathologist's garden is not too problematic after all!

Brian Greig, AAIS, Farnham.

P.S. Just discovered - an attack of Azalea gall caused by the fungus *Exobasidium vaccinii*. Pale green waxy galls develop in place of foliage. Although unsightly the galls wither at the end of the summer and then the plant continues to grow and flower normally. The galls should be removed promptly and destroyed, before the spore layer develops.