



Tree Damage Alert No 125

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

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2nd May
2008

Phellinus punctatus

Phellinus punctatus what is that?

Regular readers of Tree Damage Alerts (TDA) will recall that in TDA 121 “Not all Plane sailing” *Phellinus punctatus* was recorded as being “currently found on London planes in France and Italy where infection results in **decay**” and that “This problem has not yet been reported in the UK.”. We can now update that information.

As a result of the TDA a case of *Phellinus punctatus* occurring on London plane *Platanus x hispanica* has been reported from Littlehampton, West Sussex. A fruit body has been examined and identified by pathologists.

The tree is situated on the edge of a public park in a strip of mixed woodland and has a DBH 1.45m.

The tree has been inspected recently by pathologists from Forest Research and AAIS. There were seven fruit bodies of *Phellinus punctatus* clearly visible on the stem at a height of 6 – 9m causing an extensive canker approximately 3m long and 0.45m wide. The wood behind the canker was decayed to a depth of at least 15 – 20cm and there were several Woodpecker nesting holes in the wood.

Phellinus punctatus does occur in Britain on Hazel (*Corylus* sp.) and Willow (*Salix* sp.) but only on dead wood where it is not regarded as a pathogen. It is possible that the fungus was present in the surrounding woodland and that was the inoculum for infection of the London plane.

It should be remembered that on London plane this fungus can cause cankers on the bark, but being pale buff and flat they are extremely difficult to see on the mottled bark of plane trees. The fruit bodies merge into the bark but the presence of a narrow to broad black zone at the top of the fruit-body is diagnostic. It is a true canker rot, initially causing a rapidly spreading canker before developing an intense white rot involving both sapwood and heartwood. Affected trees have frequently suffered from stem failure through a canker.

Congratulations to Ian Brewster, the eagle-eyed tree officer at Arun District Council who spotted the fruit body of *Phellinus punctatus* on the fallen limb of the London plane.

Keep your eyes open and report anything unusual by contacting either the Forest Research’s Disease Diagnosis and Advisory Service or The Tree Advice Trust’s Arboricultural Advisory and Information Service at the above address.

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This is one of an occasional series of Tree Damage Alerts produced for the benefit of the arboricultural profession and issued by the Arboricultural Advisory and Information Service.