

Fire Blight

How to manage and treat trees in your landscape that have been affected by fire blight



This bacterial infection causes young leaves and shoots to wilt and bend downward, forming a hook shape. Black wilted foliage can appear burned or scorched. Fire blight will kill blossoms and shoots, and cause dieback of branches with cankers.

Unfortunately there is no cure for fire blight, and it will continue to spread. It can, however, be managed.

Management

- Proper fertilization: Avoid high nitrogen fertilizers in order to inhibit new growth. Do not fertilize hail-damaged trees.
- Irrigation: Water around the base of the tree to avoid wetting leaves, as water encourages bacterial growth. Avoid irrigating while blooming.
- Keep the area around the tree free of leaf/fruit debris and weeds.
- Monitor for damaged areas that change color or spread.
- Pruning: Prune only in dry weather. Delay summer pruning until the terminal bud has set and growth has ceased. It's preferable to prune when the tree is dormant in the winter. Prune infected shoots and branches at least 8-12" behind the browning area of the shoot. Sterilize after each cut with disinfectant. Avoid hard pruning, as this can cause excessive new growth. Remove damaged or split fruit (dented is okay). Dispose of all infected material in a bag to prevent spread. Cut out cankers on branches, preferably in the winter.

Outbreaks can be exacerbated by certain weather conditions such as heavy rain, hail, and winds strong enough to cause wounds (allowing entry for the bacteria). Natural openings like flowers are also another point of entry for bacteria.

Treatment

Spring is the best time to treat already infected trees. If your tree develops fire blight during the spring season, maintenance procedures are recommended until the following spring when treatment

At a Glance

There is no cure for fire blight.

The best course of action is management to prevent spread, and treatment during bloom and dormancy periods.

Avoid wetting leaves when watering.

Avoid fertilizing after hail damage.

Prune only in dry weather.

Keep the area around the tree free of leaf and fruit debris, as well as weeds.

Prune cankers from branches in the winter.

Treat with Streptomycin Sulfate or Copper Fungicide and **read all label instructions.**

can begin. Time of spraying is a crucial component of effective treatment. **Read and follow all label instructions.**

Streptomycin Sulfate is recommended for homeowners. This can be found under the brand name Fertilome.

- For best results, pH of water for mixing should be around 5.1 – 5.6.
- Apply first treatment at the beginning of the blossoming period.
- Repeat every 3–4 days during bloom.
- Do not apply when fruit is visible.
- Do not use this product after symptom development, as it can lead to antibiotic resistance in the bacterial strain.
- Another treatment method is copper fungicide, applied during dormancy or during blossom.
- You can find other treatments through various tree services, and these should also be applied during blossom or dormancy.

For More Information*



[*Plant Talk Colorado, Fire Blight*](#)



[*CSU Extension - Fire Blight*](#)

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