

Leaves Falling on Your Ash?

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Anthrachnose is a fungal disease caused a member of the *Discula* genus. Spores of this fungus are spread by wind and splashing rain and often infect buds, shoots, and newly expanding leaves. Sporulation is triggered by cool wet weather during the spring and summer. Ash trees of many species, including green, black, and white ash are susceptible to infection. This creates a problem in that many green ashes have been planted over the last 30 years or so.

Early infection results in large necrotic (dead) areas and distortion of leaves. Some years the trees just start dropping leaflets as opposed to putting up with the disease. Late infections (summer) result in large areas of dead tissue. The disease starts in the lower inner portion of the crown as that is the most humid area of the tree. Disease will progress upward in the tree depending on the weather.

Proper watering and mulching has been shown to help trees fight diseases like anthracnose and many others. Stressed trees are more prone to infection and, as discussed last week, many if not all urban trees are stressed. Fertilizing in the spring will boost the vigor of a stressed tree and may offer some level of protection.

Sanitation is an important management technique for anthracnose. Rake any fallen leaves and destroy them (especially in the fall) and prune any dead branches as this fungus will infect branches too. Chemicals can be used if your trees suffer defoliation for three out of five years. Spray your trees before bud break in the spring with a fungicide that contains chlorothalnil or thiophanate-methyl. At this point it is too late to use fungicides. Be sure to read the label and apply as directed.

In the meantime don't worry about your ash trees. They will be ok even if they totally defoliate; they will put out new leaves. By the time these new leaves are there the weather, hopefully, will be warmer and disease development from anthracnose will be minimal.

For addition information about Ash Anthracnose or any other horticultural questions feel free to call on me at 605-394-2188 or email to ricky.abrahamson@sdstate.edu.