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VITACARE CLIENT

Fire Blight



By the time that this letter gets into your hands it may be getting a bit late but hopefully not too late to suppress the degenerative effects of the bacterial disease called Fire Blight in your ornamental pear trees. The disease also appears in crabapples, apple trees, and hawthorns. Fire Blight gets its name from the scorched appearance it gives to affected twigs and leaf clusters. They will look shriveled and browned just as though they had been burned with a propane torch.

If you saw this phenomenon last year, then it is important to inject your tree now. A timely antibiotic treatment into the cambial tissue of the tree's stem suppresses the destructive effects of this disfiguring and potentially lethal disease. The most effective

time to administer treatment is at or near the time of flower and shortly after the probability of a late and serious freeze.



*Fruit spurs on pear with fire blight infected blossoms
(Photo by A.L. Jones, Michigan State University)*

Symptomatically damaged tissue should be pruned from the tree as soon as it appears and destroyed or re-

moved from the site. In doing this, it is important to sterilize the pruning equipment after each cut in order to avoid re-inoculating clean tissue with the bacterium. When removing damaged tissue from the tree, each pruning cut should be six to eight inches inward into healthy tissue in order to also remove incipient inoculum that is present in as yet non-symptomatic tissue. Also, leaves and twigs on the ground should be completely gathered up and removed since they also have the potential of disease re-infection.

Trees that are so seriously infected that pruning out all visibly affected tissue would disfigure the overall tree may be candidates for removal.

Did You Know . . .

. . . that when you are moving a young tree to a new site, the diameter of the root ball should be minimally between 8 to 10 times the trunk diameter (measured about six inches above the soil line for trees up to 4") in order to bring along enough root system for a dependable healthy start. Also, if you have to transport the tree to the site over a distance of more than ten miles or so, it is recommended to cover the canopy (leaves) in order to prevent excessive water loss in transit resulting from wind.

Container grown trees can frequently have a mat of circling roots that, if excessive, should be severed vertically along the sides of the root ball prior to setting in the hole in order to subsequently encourage radial root expansion.

If you have future plans for moving a small tree on site in the following year, a preparatory root pruning can be helpful in confining a larger percentage of the new root growth within the prospective root ball. This is done by cutting about 50% of the roots in alternate spade widths around the outline of the root ball that will be actually dug the following year.



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