

Frost Damage

An unusual case of frost damage to pine and spruce occurred in the north of Scotland this year. Warm conditions in early spring resulted in the dehardening of old needles which were then damaged by frost (a minimum of 6°C was recorded in the region as late as 17th May). The trees subsequently flushed and now display a pattern of browning which would not normally be associated with spring frost injury.



Alder dieback

We have received a number of reports of alders with browned and dead tops to their crowns this year. Alders in northern Britain can suffer from *Phytophthora* disease (see Path News 9) but in the west and north of Scotland they more commonly suffer from dieback. Dieback is characterised by the presence of long strips of dead bark on the stems and branches which often bear fruit bodies of the fungus *Valsa oxystoma*.

Heterobasidion annosum on Scots pine

Killing of Scots pine by *Heterobasidion annosum* is generally encountered on sites with a high soil pH. Over the last few months, however, we have investigated a number of cases of pine killing on acid soils. The affected plantations were all located on freely-draining sites with open-textured sandy soils. The very dry conditions in late 2003 and early 2004 may have played a contributory role in disease development.



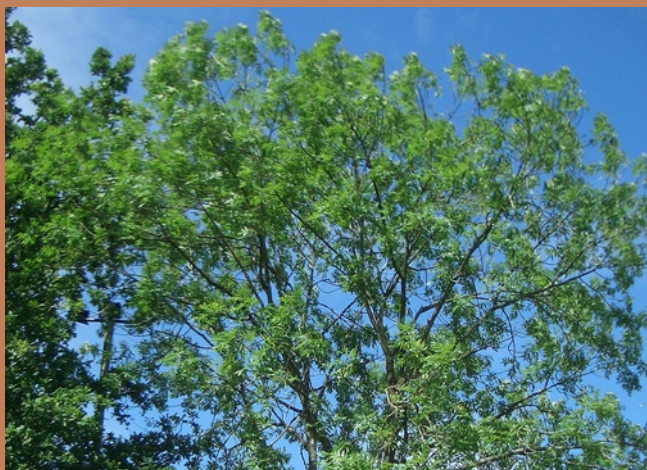
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Red Band Needle Blight

Red band needle blight, caused by the fungus *Dothistroma pini*, affects Corsican pine. Infection causes premature needle loss, yield reduction and sometimes tree death. Older needles are most obviously affected and the red bands upon them are most evident from May-September. The disease is notifiable and has become more common recently, so if you suspect infection please contact: anna.brown@forestry.gsi.gov.uk



Thin Ash Crowns

Several enquirers have asked why many ash trees have sparse crowns and if it is a sign of ill-health. Ash was very late coming into leaf this year, apparently due to the cold spell in late spring. Also, seed production was very heavy last year, taking a toll on the trees so they took longer to come into full leaf. Both factors have probably contributed to the lack of leaves but otherwise the trees are in good health.

Frothing Oak

There have been reports of oaks with a frothy exudate on their stems anywhere from ground level to 3m up the trunk. The exudate, which gives off a strong stale beer smell, comes from wild yeasts infecting sap seeping from damaged bark. Wasps, hornets and butterflies are then attracted to the fermenting liquid. The bark damage can be due to fungi causing localised bark death or cracks caused by physiological changes.



If you see any of these diseases in your area, we would be interested to know.

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