Forest Research

Path News

The pathology bulletin
Issue 27: Autumn 2013

Scotland & Northern Britain

Phytophthora ramorum on larch

Aerial surveys conducted in May and early June 2013 have shown a major expansion of *P. ramorum*-infected larch in the Dumfries & Galloway area (below), with about 4,000 – 6,000 hectares of larch now likely to be infected. This is believed to be a result of exceptionally wet and windy conditions over the summer and autumn 2012, promoting spread and infection. All infected larch will be felled due to the potential risk of infection of other tree and heath land species.

Phytophthora austrocedrae on Juniper

Phytophthora austrocedrae is being found killing juniper (*Juniperus communis*) at an increasing number of sites in northern England and Scotland. The pathogen will also infect *Juniperus horizontalis* (below).
P. austrocedrae can be detected in soil and could potentially be spread in soil adhering to footwear. Members of the public can help minimise the risk of spread of this pathogen by cleaning boots and other equipment of soil after visiting the hills.

Birch dieback

The Tree Health Advisory Service in Scotland received a number of enquiries concerning dieback of birch this summer. Typically, affected trees are silver birch, which tend to show defoliation and dieback of shoots in the lower crown, with the upper portion of the crown still bearing leaves (below, left). A fungal disease, *Marssonina betulae*, is the most likely causal agent of these symptoms. The pathogen infects leaves causing brown 'star-shaped' lesions (below, right), and can also attack shoots causing darkened, sunken cankers leading to dieback.

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England & Wales

Leaf blotch of horse chestnut

This summer leaf blotch of horse chestnut, *Guignardia aesculi* (below), has been very widespread. This has led to some confusion as to whether observed leaf damage is due to this disease or the leaf miner, *Cameraria ohridella*. Guignardia leaf blotches are spread over the leaf surface including the veins, are opaque when held up to the light and have a yellow margin. Though dramatic and disfiguring, the disease causes no long-term damage to the tree.

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Honey fungus

This autumn has seen an abundance of fruiting bodies of the honey fungus (*Armillaria* species) (below). Usually the fruit bodies are rarely present and the only way to confirm that a tree is infected by this fungus is to look for mycelium under the bark. However, even if the fruit-bodies are present it is always necessary to check for bark killing and the presence of mycelium to confirm the presence of *Armillaria*.

Not Chalara

Despite a large number of reports of suspected Chalara on ash we have only confirmed a small number as actually being due to Chalara. Other agents we have identified include Nectria and bacterial canker, mite damage to leaves and herbicide damage. Herbicide damage can mimic dieback and defoliation by diseases. All cases so far this year have been due to glyphosate causing the classic 'little-leaf' symptom (below).

The Research Agency of the Forestry Commission

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