

Sirococcus Blight

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Identification, Biology & Management

Sirococcus blight caused by the fungus *Sirococcus tsugae* was initially identified in 2013 as the causal organism causing severe shoot blight and defoliation of Atlantic cedar. Although mainly seen on Atlantic Cedar this disease can infect Deodar cedar (*C. deodara*) as well as Hemlock (*Tsuga* species). Unmanaged this disease can cause considerable damage to valuable ornamental trees in public and private gardens.

Symptoms

Foliar symptoms are seen in the spring to include dead needles on the shoots, dead shoots, cankers and gum exudation. The key sign of Sirococcus blight is the fact that the dead needles turn a distinctive characteristic 'pink' colour that becomes brown as the season progresses (Figures 1-2). Using a hand lens the fruiting bodies may be observed on the needles and twigs.

Infected branches may display cankering symptoms which are characterised by a change of bark colour from green to a darker red/purple. Resin bleeding from the bark can sometimes be observed and branches, if girdled, will die.

Control

No effective control measures against *S. tsugae* have been reported to date. Diseased needles should be collected and destroyed in autumn. Fertilisation will maintain tree vigour and possibly help offset the deleterious effects of premature defoliation.

Figure 1: Symptoms of Sirococcus blight



Figure 2: Sirococcus blight on Cedar twig



Sprays with the fungicide mancozeb may provide some degree of protection but repeat sprays will need to be performed through-out

the growing season. Phosphite sprays and/or soil drenches to stimulate tree vitality as part of a fertiliser programme may help in the short term but their effectiveness against this disease has not been tested.



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