

FIRE BLIGHT

This devastating and highly contagious bacterial plant disease is firmly established in Okotoks. Fire blight is declared a pest under the Alberta Pest Act and **must** be removed from affected trees and shrubs.

Susceptible trees and shrubs: Mountain Ash, Hawthorn, Apples, Crabapples, Cotoneaster hedges, Pear. Please inspect your trees and shrubs!



Symptoms: Wilted leaves and blossoms remain on curled branches that appear scorched by fire. Look for this to happen early in the growing season. Cankers along the branches form creating sunken areas on bark that are discolored with exfoliating bark. These cankers may also show the organism, which is a yellow or brown ooze present in the growing season.

Treatment: Managing this disease can be difficult but there are some things that can be done to help control the spread of the disease. First, avoid planting susceptible species, or plant them minimally. Hawthorn appears to show the most resistance of the susceptible species. Cotoneaster usually has an extremely high incident rate because it is sheared. Shearing creates rough cuts on the branches leaving many points of entry for the disease to establish. Furthermore, try other dwarf plants for hedges instead, like burning bush (*Euonymus* spp.), dwarf lilac, dwarf barberry, potentilla, etc. Planting these dwarf species for hedges can reduce or eliminate shearing which can create a healthier plant. Keeping the plants healthy is critical if you choose to use susceptible plants. Watering, mulching (promotes root growth) and proper pruning will help minimize the spread and introduction of the disease. Diseased branches should be pruned out at least 12 inches below the infection. Be sure to prune in dry conditions, use sharp tools and prune the affected areas last if there is other pruning being done in the plant. As a minimum, disinfect your tools between plants with ethyl alcohol or Spray Nine_R. Infected branches should be burned or buried. If you are unsure how to make proper pruning cuts, it is recommended you call a certified arborist.

Call the Urban Forester at 403-938-8958 for further information.