



Sweet Chestnut Blight – *Cryphonectria parasitica*



Sweet chestnut blight is caused by a fungus of Asian origin called *Cryphonectria parasitica*. Several cases of the disease affecting sweet chestnut trees have been found in England since 2011.

The disease has caused severe losses of American sweet chestnut (*Castanea dentata*) in North America. In continental Europe the disease has caused regionally significant losses of sweet chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) which is grown for both its edible nut and for timber. In many European countries the disease is now widespread.

The fungus does not affect horse chestnut trees (*Aesculus hippocastanum*). The fungus can infect some species of oak although its impact is less severe on oak than on sweet chestnut.



Don't give
pests and
diseases
an easy ride



If you think you have spotted a case of this disease please take several clear, well lit photos of the symptoms and the infected trees in context and report it through Tree Alert at forestry.gov.uk/treelalert

To prevent the spread of this pathogen from affected areas, any potentially infected material should not be removed. If you are working on a site where this disease is suspected or confirmed, please refer to the latest guidance on the biosecure handling of potentially infected material.

You can help to slow the spread of this disease by practising good biosecurity.



Think kit

If working on a site suspected to have the disease, footwear, outerwear and equipment must have all soil and organic material removed and be washed clean before being sprayed with an approved disinfectant.



Think transport

The pathogen can exist as a saprotroph (feeding on dead organic material) allowing it to persist even when the infected trees have been removed. It's therefore very important that organic material from a suspected or confirmed site is not transported to a new area.



Think trees

Imported sweet chestnut plants and seeds must be accompanied by a plant passport declaring them to have originated from an area free of the disease. Imports must also be pre-notified to the plant health authorities to enable inspection.

Symptoms Guide: Sweet Chestnut Blight



Retained leaves

Leaves wilt and turn brown, but remain hanging on the tree. Below the canker, branches have healthy foliage. Squirrel and deer damage may also cause leaves to be retained.



Epicormic growth

Epicormic shooting below the canker are a visible sign that the stem has been completely girdled by chestnut blight.

Canker symptoms

On young, smooth-barked branches, the cankered bark can be a bright brown. On older stem infections, the discoloration or sunken nature of the infected bark is much less obvious.



Fruit bodies

Masses of yellow-orange to reddish-brown pustules, the size of a pin-head, develop on infected bark. These fruit bodies erupt through lenticels and exude long, orange-yellow tendrils of spores in moist weather.



(Photo: Helen Carter, FC England)



Mycelial fans

Pale brown mycelial fans form in the inner bark, although these can only be revealed by cutting away the outer bark.

(Photo: Helen Carter, FC England)



Split bark

Sometimes the disease's progress is slow and new layers of bark form under the affected areas, so that swelling and subsequent cracking of the outer bark occurs.

(Photo: Mick Biddle, FC England)

For more details, please visit www.forestry.gov.uk/chestnutblight