

## Massaria Disease of Plane – *Splanchnonema platani*



Massaria, *Splanchnonema platani* spores  
(Courtesy of Bartlett Tree Research Labs)

Massaria disease of plane trees, caused by the fungus *Splanchnonema platani*, is affecting London plane trees (*Platanus x hispanica*) in England. It is associated with branches dying back and an increased risk of failure.

### Distribution

It was found in living plane trees in London in 2009 and Bristol more recently. In 2009 tree management teams in London working on plane began to notice large lesions and branch drop. Similar symptoms have been seen on lesions of plane trees in mainland Europe, most notably in Germany, Austria, the Netherlands and parts of France.

### Impact

London plane trees are widely planted in towns and cities as shade and amenity trees, so the presence of the disease can be a significant public safety issue for their owners; many of which are local authorities. The dead wood has to be removed before it becomes an unacceptable hazard.



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pests and  
diseases  
an easy ride



If you think you have spotted this disease in a tree, then report it through the Forestry Commission's online Tree Alert form: [forestry.gov.uk/trealert](https://www.forestry.gov.uk/trealert)

There is no available treatment for the disease apart from removing diseased branches before they become an unacceptable safety hazard. People who work on plane trees can help to minimise the rate of spread by practising good biosecurity.



### Think kit

Clean and disinfect tools and equipment, and wash and dry ropes before using them to work on another tree.



### Think transport

Remove any build up of soil or organic material from vehicles and machinery before moving on to a new site.



### Think trees

Destroy all infected material through incineration or deep burial, either on site or at a licensed waste handling facility.

## Symptoms Guide: Massaria Disease of Plane

### Pinkish hue

The disease first appears as a pinkish strip on the upper surface of the branch.

(Photo: Ian Keen LTD)



### Cambium death

Affected branches suffer death of the bark and cambium (the layer of tissue just under the bark), which can affect up to 30% of the branch circumference.



### Extending lesion

The infection develops into a lesion extending from a union with the parent branch or stem. These lesions can extend many metres, but because they affect the upper part of the branch, infection can be difficult to see from the ground.

(Photo: Ian Keen LTD)



### Wood decay

Lesions are associated with wood decay, characterised by soft rot, often resulting in the death and / or the fracture of the branch. Arboriculturalists with London's Royal Parks have seen branch failure within three months of the symptoms first becoming noticeable, but branch failure can occur after one or more years.

(Photo: London Tree Officers Association)



For more details, please visit [www.forestry.gov.uk/massaria](https://www.forestry.gov.uk/massaria)