

Pine Tree Blight

They are everywhere. You can't miss them. Pine trees in the Phoenix area and across the Southwest are in great distress. Their condition has been described as PINE BLIGHT and symptoms include browning of needles, primarily at the ends of branches in mature trees. If the blight is minor, trees can recover. If the blight spreads to large areas of the tree crown, the reduced photosynthesis plus insect damage and sunburn can result in tree death.

Experts have been researching the causes of PINE BLIGHT for many years and have been unable to isolate a single insect or disease pathogen responsible for the blight. Several disease agents and insects have been found but their inconsistent presence in affected trees points to other abiotic factors as preconditions for infection or infestation.

Some of these abiotic factors include lack of winter rain, extreme summer heat, limited planting space, soil compaction and low energy reserves due to over-pruning and sunburn. These environmental and cultural factors may be creating a perfect storm of precursors or stressors that make Aleppo Pines vulnerable to the wide spectrum of disease and insect problems we are finding.

Pathogens and insects discovered include Diplodia, a fungal pathogen that attacks and kills needles. Pine feeding mites have also been found. Dead needles often persist on twigs and needles and eventually drop, exposing trunk and major branches to sunburn. Sunburned wood is then vulnerable to flat-headed borer and other insect infestations.

Recommendations:

- 1. Treatment is available for some conditions. Have your trees assessed by a qualified professional. We recommend an aerial inspection and collecting tissue and/or root samples for an accurate diagnosis by a reputable lab.**
- 2. Don't trim out the dead needles. Often the twigs and branches are still viable and may re-foliate. Also dead needles provide protection from sunburn to the main branches and trunk.**
- 3. Improve the cultural conditions around both healthy and affected trees to reduce stress and facilitate recovery. Deep soak trees every 3 to 4 weeks. Also, to improve the rooting environment, consider applying compost and a low-nitrogen fertilizer with added soil amendments. As go the roots, so go the shoots.**

For additional information or to schedule an appointment with a Certified Arborist, call us at 602-788-0005 or online at www.itreeservice.com/contact.