THE UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
Colleges of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences & Family and Consumer Sciences

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HOMEOWNER PLANT DISEASE CLINIC REPORT

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Given the fact that homeowner sample submission has been low, I have decided to once again combine monthly reports. So the diagnostic information contained in this report will be from both February and March 2009. With temperatures warming and the recent rains, I expect sample submission to the Athens Plant Disease Clinic to increase rapidly.

As a reminder, please send samples early in the week if possible. Samples that get shipped to the clinic on Thursday or Friday tend to get dried up and/or lost in the UGA mail system over the weekend. If a homeowner brings a sample in on one of those days, place it in a cooler or a fridge until Monday morning when you can ship it. Also, remember, do not add any additional moisture to shipped/temporarily stored samples.

This month I will discuss the recent browning/necrosis/dieback issues that we have seen on junipers in home landscapes. Please feel free to email me questions, if they arise. ENJOY!

February/March 2009 Homeowner Samples

County	Plant	Common Name of Disease (Pathogen)	Type of Sample – DDDI or Physical
Berrien	Centipede	Possible Fairy ring (clamp connection mycelia)	Physical
Bibb	Pittosporum	Fungal leaf spot (*Alternaria* sp.)	Both
Bibb	Leyland Cypress	No disease found	Physical
Camden	St. Augustine	Take all root rot (*GGG*)	Both
Cobb	Juniper	No disease found	Physical
Coweta	Zoysia	Anthracnose (*Colletotrichum* sp.)	DDDI
Coweta	Cleyera	Unable to determine	DDDI
Dougherty	Holly	Unable to determine	DDDI
Grady	Day lily	Bacterial crown rot	Physical
Greene	Ligustrum & Lorapetalum	No disease found	Physical

County	Plant	Common Name of Disease (Pathogen)	Type of Sample – DDDI or Physical
Gwinnett	Cryptomeria japonica	Possible cold damage/drought stress	DDDI
Gwinnett	Hawthorn	Leaf spot (*Entomosporium* sp.)	DDDI
Gwinnett	Arborvitae	Unable to determine	DDDI
Henry	Blue Star Creeper	Blight/root rot (*Rhizoctonia* sp.)	Both
Jasper	Apple tree	No disease – possible compounded stresses	DDDI
Laurens	Muscadine	Fusarium sp. – secondary	DDDI
Lumpkin	Juniper	No disease found	Physical
Meriwether	Mondo grass	Anthracnose (*Colletotrichum* sp.)	Physical
Morgan	English Boxwood	No disease found – cultural issues	Both
Newton	Rose	Unable to determine	DDDI
White	Aucuba & Arborvitae	No disease found – pine sap	Physical
Total samples (February-March) = 21 DDDI = 9 Physical = 8 Both = 4			

JUNIPER PROBLEMS

We have seen an increased number of juniper samples in the diagnostic clinic over the last several months. The typical symptom description of these problematic junipers varies from: branch dieback to yellowing, browning, and dead limbs. Most times, we do not receive any root system with the foliage samples; thereby, preventing us from ruling out root diseases.

Most often, we receive the low-growing varieties of junipers. As you may know, junipers prefer dry soils with excellent drainage and, of course, full sun. Knowing these characteristics of their growing habits helps us understand why plants grown in heavy clay, poorly-drained soils oftentimes do not survive.

Although damage to junipers are often times attributed to plant disease organisms, in most cases that we've seen in the diagnostic clinic, the problem is a cultural one. A twig blight, caused by the fungus *Phomopsis juniperovora*, is one of the more common disease problems. The scale-like leaves turn yellow/light brown/tan and die, then the whole branch or twig dies. The dieback is usually random within the planting. The damage can be more severe on the interior of the planting and where branches split from the main trunk. For management of this pathogenic problem, prune out infected areas, avoid watering overhead/evening watering, increase air circulation, and avoid wounding branches.

As previously mentioned, there can be cultural problems with homeowner juniper plantings. Georgia's wet, heavy, clay soils prevent junipers from thriving. Junipers that are mulched with bark can do poorly as well due to the gradual burying of the crown of plants on the bottom of an incline/hill. It is important not to over-mulch these plantings and if the crowns do get buried, remove the excess mulch.

A problem that we see very often is the improper planting of junipers (i.e. the tendency to plant junipers too deeply) or the natural sinking of the plant as the soil and plant settles. This tends to cause cracking of the bark on the crown and the dieback of foliage. Depending on the extent of the damage, affected plants may have to be discarded.

Lastly, if one or more of the previous factors are not involved with the decline of your homeowner's juniper plants, then the roots should be examined. Check for girdling roots, wet, water soaked, sloughing roots, and any root rot organisms. If a root rot organism is the problem, then the underlying factor is over-watering. This is the starting place for a management plan. Remove the affected plants and discard. Correct the drainage problem before replanting in that particular area. (Treating with a fungicide is a possibility if the organism is accurately identified).

Photo: T. Wynne, Newton Co

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