

Fire Blight

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Apples and pears may get a bacterial disease called fire blight. The tips of the branches turn black as though they were burned by fire. The end of the branch bends over like a shepherd's crook. The disease can progress into the tree and kill it. Infected limbs and branches may ooze. Insects can spread the disease during bloom through the flowers they visit.

Will this disease kill your tree? I don't know! (Don't you wonder why they hired me now?) Some flowering and edible pear trees and apples are resistant to the disease and some are not. If your tree is resistant, the disease will probably stop. If not, then the disease may kill it.

Carefully cut out the dead branches if you can. Prune them out six to eight inches below the bottom of the brown part. The disease is easy to spread. Clean your shears between every cut by dipping them in isopropyl alcohol. Collect all clippings and throw them away. Always plant disease resistant varieties. Do not fertilize heavily with nitrogen as this may make it worse. Fire blight can infect apple, pear, flowering pear, pyracantha and loquat.

There is a spray (Streptomycin) that is recommended to prevent fire blight. It must be sprayed before the tree is infected every several days during bloom. I feel like this is not a useful tool because of these restrictions. The main control is planting resistant varieties.