

IMPORTANT : Phytophthora Root Rot

What is Phytophthora?

Phytophthora is a soil-borne fungal disease which causes crown and root rot of herbaceous and woody plants, including fruit, nut, ornamental trees and shrubs, as well as selected vegetable crops. It is quite prevalent in ex-orchard plantations where orchard plants have been removed and the remainder of the root system left to rot.

Phytophthora can develop around the base of the plant if soil remains wet for long periods of time, or also when the plant is buried too deep. In trees and shrubs, the pathogen kills its host by growing from the roots up through the root crown and into the lower trunk. It is important that there is adequate soil drainage when planting your shrubs and trees.

What are the symptoms?

The leaves of plants affected by Phytophthora rot appear to be drought stressed, your trees or plants will often wilt and die rapidly with the first warm weather of the season (November to March). Leaves may turn dull green, yellow or in some cases red or purplish. Often it's only the plants in the most poorly drained areas of the garden that are affected. It is more prone to kill the youngest of trees because the root systems and crown area are small compared to larger robust trees.

Symptoms may develop first on one branch or stem and then spread to the rest of the tree or plant. Some trees can take a period of years to succumb to the disease, some may perish in a season. Slow decline is when the root system is attacked and rapid is when the trunk or crown are affected by the disease. Symptoms on the trunk of a plant, include discolour of areas of bark, dark sap may ooze from the margins of the trunk area.

Management:

- * Good soil drainage.
- * Good water management.
- * When planting trees and shrubs, dig hole larger than the root ball itself and breakthrough the hardpan at the base of the hole then fill it with water to determine if drainage is sufficient.
- * If your soil is prone to infection best to plant trees and shrubs on mounds. Mounds should be 8-10 inches high, plant roots should be at the top soil level and the graft union well above the soil line. Do not water the crown directly, and do not cover the graft union with mulch or bark.
- * If plant is wilting, check soil before watering, as this may be a symptom of phytophthora, so do not water as you will only feed the disease.
- * **Foschek** Fungicide, is recommended to prevent the spread of Phytophthora through your plants root system and can be applied externally over the plant, and to be applied carefully as per instruction.

It is very important that your plants are selected from a reputable source, and remember to select the most resistant rootstocks or varieties available for your area, hence meaning carefully selecting individual plants that are free of symptoms.

Thanks from the team at Trees and More.

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