



By Brian Sams

E-mail: briansams@live.com.au
www.wattletreehorticulture.com.au

Cypress canker fact sheet

A large number of conifers in the local area have been badly damaged by cypress canker. Cypress Canker is a serious fungal disease of certain exotic conifers and is unfortunately spreading throughout some areas of Australia.



Seiridium cardinale has been responsible for hundreds of deaths of cupressus conifers. Spores enter the plant through natural cracks in the bark, by wounds caused by borers and other insects and through injuries caused by gardening equipment or falling branches. The fungus interferes with the sap-conducting system, eventually causing death of a branch or main trunk above the wound. Older trees are usually more susceptible to the disease, but any tree can succumb if it is stressed, for example by drought or nutrient deficiency. The most common symptom is that the plant starts to die from the top down, however assorted dead branches appearing at random over the tree, combined with sap oozing from splits and cracks on the trunk is also an indicator. Branches die rapidly, yellowing almost overnight as the foliage is starved of sap. Conifers planted in avenues or rows tend to be more affected by the disease. This is

caused by rain splash. Spores are also carried by the wind, insects and also by the feet of birds.

The most commonly affected species are the cypresses – **Monterey Cypress** *Cupressus macrocarpa*, **Italian Cypress** *Cupressus sempervirens*, **Arizona Cypress** *Cupressus arizonica*, **False Cypress** or **Lawson's Cypress** *Cupressus lawsoniana*, and hybrids like the x *Cupressocyparis leylandii* including cultivars like 'Castlewellan Gold', 'Leighton's Green', 'Naylor's Blue', and 'Swane's Golden'. Once a tree has turned brown there is nothing that can be done to resurrect it and it has to be removed. With a tree about 30% in decline where the foliage is a rusty brown it can be sprayed with a chemical that has the active ingredient phosphorus acid or copper oxychloride. This will be effective for a small plant. With a much larger plant where it is not feasible to spray the entire canopy it is more efficient to inject the plant with the active ingredient. If in doubt consult an arborist or your local nursery.

As very dry soil and lack of nutrients are certainly a contributing factor to the outbreak of this disease it makes sense to try and make sure that the trees are growing as well as possible.

That means

- Deep watering (avoid the temptation to water a little bit often – try to water to a depth of at least 60cm about every 3 – 4 weeks)
- Mulch to the drip line
- Fertilise in spring or early summer and again after the hot weather has passed



