

Pine Tree Damage in the Fall

How have your pines fared over the summer? There are several diseases of pines that surface during the late summer so this is a good time to observe any changes that may be taking place. A few of the more common pine tree diseases are listed below.

Pine Wilt Disease

Pine wilt is a major disease that destroys pines in this area. The pine sawyer beetle infects the pine with a microscopic worm, a nematode, in the spring and summer. This nematode spreads and blocks the tree's circulation. In late summer and early winter, the pine will die and turn brown over a period of weeks to months. Sometimes it seems as if the tree turns brown overnight. Other times, you may first notice partial dieback but, eventually, the tree will turn brown. This is a sign the tree is dying, and it should be removed to prevent losing nearby trees due to its infectious nature. Scots pines are most susceptible to this disease, but it can infect other non-native pine trees (e.g. White, Mugho, Slash, and Austrian)

Dothistroma Needle Blight

Dothistroma Needle Blight is a late summer fungus involving young interior needles of the lower limbs. Yellow spots develop in the middle of needles and progress to brown or reddish bands. Needles die from the bands outward while the base remains green until winter. The whole needle dies in winter and are shed the next spring and summer, causing it to be confused with stress or natural needle drop. Loblolly pines, that are common in this area, are susceptible to this needle blight. Treatment for such is performed in the Spring with a fungicide such as a Bordeaux solution.*

Environmental Damage

Browning of needles may occur with severe drought, especially when windy. Needle damage is usually on the most exposed side. Likewise, in the winter freeze damage causes partial or complete dieback of new needles and are worse where they are exposed. This also includes construction around the roots or simply anything that damages the roots whether they are exposed or buried.

Natural needle drop

This occurs in the Fall when interior needles drop and there is no evidence of fungal elements or webs, frass or hollow stems to suggest moths.

Many of these diseases can be controlled by planting disease resistant trees. When you see the problem arise, clean up any fallen needles and, if possible, prune out any dieback. In other words, keep the area under the trees clean to prevent any further contamination from the ground.

While pines are not indigenous to our area, they can be found indigenous (common) in the far northeast and southeast areas of the state. Many of these are classified as short pines.

The **Loblolly Pine** is recommended for our area. **Bosinian** and **Vanderwolf** pines can be found as selections in OKLAHOMA PROVEN. They are more resistant like the Loblolly pine but still can be infected.

*Oklahoma Extension Agents Handbook, page 488

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