

PESTS & DISEASES – PEAR LEAF BLISTER MITE

Pear leaf blister mite is a microscopic gall mite which affects the leaves of pear trees. They overwinter underneath the outer bud scales and in spring emerge and penetrate the developing foliage. They feed by sucking out the contents of the leaf cells whilst producing secretions that create small blisters on the leaves.

DAMAGE: In spring, new foliage develops with slightly raised reddish pink or yellowish green blisters up to 4mm in diameter. In summer they turn a blackish brown. The whole leaf can be affected, and almost all the leaves on a tree may become blackened. The mite does not normally affect cropping or the health of the tree.

TREATMENT: If you discover a light infestation the infested leaves or shoots can be removed, this may stop the mite spreading all over the tree. However taking off infested leaves of a heavily affected tree will do more harm to the tree than the mite. There are no pesticides available to home gardeners that are effective against this mite, so its presence has to be tolerated.



HOW ARE DISEASES SPREAD?

Most fungal infections are carried by spores being blown, from one plant to another by the wind, or transmitted in water splashes. Bacterial infections are spread in the same way although insects can also carry them. Viruses are transmitted by sap-feeding insects, especially aphids.

PREVENTING DISEASE

Plants are most at risk when they have just been pruned or are damaged. It is imperative to prune at the correct time of the year – Winter season (when the tree is dormant (lost all of it's leaves)) for fruits with a pip; apples, pears and quinces. Growing season (July/August even if fruit is on the tree) for stone fruits; apricots, cherries, gages, nectarines, peaches and plums.

■ Do not overcrowd trees

Make sure they are planted with sufficient space between. Free-standing trees should not be planted near fences/walls/buildings etc.

■ Weed, water and feed your trees

Especially through dry spells. The healthier your tree is the more resistant to infection and disease it will be.

■ Disinfect tools

Before and after use, especially when pruning.

■ Dispose of infected matter

Clear all windfalls, pruning and any infected/diseased leaves. Burn or remove from site rather than composting.