

PESTS & DISEASES – PEAR RUST

Pear rust is a fungal disease of pear trees, causing bright orange spots on the leaves. It also affects junipers, causing perennial canker-like swellings on the branches.

DAMAGE: Red or orange spots, which are 1-2mm in diameter, develop on the upper surface of infected leaves in spring, enlarging as the season progresses through summer into autumn. Later, raised and almost horn-like spore-bearing projections appear on the lower leaf surface as the fungus really gets hold. Occasionally, cankers will develop, too. Junipers may develop similar outgrowths.

TREATMENT: Careful pruning of junipers to remove rust infections from the stems, or simply removing whole plants from the vicinity of pear trees will reduce the likelihood of infection, but note that the spores are airborne over quite long distances. Removal of leaves on heavily infected pear trees may do more harm than good. Prune out any branch cankers seen on pear trees. As well as getting rid of infected stems and leaves, keep the tree fed (but not overfed), mulched and watered to help encourage plenty of new growth.



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.