

PESTS & DISEASES – APHIDS

Often referred to as simply black fly or green fly. There are hundreds of species of aphids. They are tiny winged sap-sucking insects that multiply at an incredible rate. Aphids can overwinter as eggs and sometimes adults.

DAMAGE: An infestation can cause leaves to curl and distort and can stunt growth of the tree. The sticky honeydew that aphids excrete harbours black, sooty mould deposits, which prevent light to the leaves, causing premature leaf fall and spoil the appearance of the tree. Aphids can also transmit viral diseases.

TREATMENT: Environmental and bee-friendly products such as SB Invigorator can be used. This is best applied early in the morning or after dusk. You will need to gently unfurl any curled leaves and drench the leaf.

ORGANIC CONTROLS: Ladybirds, lacewings, parasitic wasps and other insects can act as natural predators, alongside birds and spiders.

COMPANION PLANTING: Aphids are repelled by catnip, marigolds (calendula) mustards and nasturtium will help attract aphids to them as well as beneficial insects.

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.

