

(revision date:7/22/2015)

Camellia: Ramorum leaf and shoot blight (Sudden oak death)

Use Integrated Pest Management (IPM) for successful plant problem management.

Biology

Ramorum leaf blight is caused by *Phytophthora ramorum*, the same organism that causes sudden oak death (SOD). In Washington, most cases have been found in nurseries on rhododendrons and camellias, which are highly susceptible to this disease. Some oak species, viburnum, kalmia, and Pieris are also considered highly susceptible, along with native plants such as salal and evergreen huckleberry. On camellia, damage consists of brown, irregular, water-soaked lesions with diffuse margins. These lesions typically begin at the leaf tip and spread up the midrib. Occasionally, lesions form at the edge of the leaf, as well. Lower leaves usually drop before the damage reaches the stem. Canker and shoot dieback symptoms have not been seen on camellias. Symptoms of this disease may strongly resemble those caused by sunscald, chemical damage, or cold injury, but these common problems typically have clearly defined margins. Also, *P. ramorum* has a wide and varied host range, so camellia is seldom the only species affected. **IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO CONCLUSIVELY DIAGNOSE THIS PROBLEM BASED ON VISIBLE SYMPTOMS ONLY.** In Washington, Ramorum leaf blight has so far been found only in association with infected nursery plants and water runoff from infected nursery sites. While this disease has the potential to become a serious and economically significant problem, it is not yet considered to be widespread in Washington in either cultivated or native landscapes. *P. ramorum* infection is **NOT LIKELY** in the landscape **UNLESS** the plant (1) is a highly susceptible species **AND** (2) was purchased since 2002 **AND** (3) is showing symptoms associated with *P. ramorum* infection (or is located near another plant that meets all these criteria). Currently, the only way to confirm a SOD diagnosis is with laboratory tests.

Management Options

Non-Chemical Management

- ~ Purchase plants from reputable nurseries only. Carefully inspect all plants before purchase, especially those considered highly susceptible to *P. ramorum*.
- ~ Do not buy any plants that have been lying in standing water or that have disease symptoms including leaf blight or lesions, severe leaf loss, or shoot dieback.
- ~ Quarantine new plants for 4-6 weeks before adding them to the landscape. This disease can be spread by plant debris, contaminated soil, and contaminated irrigation water and run-off, so keep quarantined plants isolated from healthy plants in the landscape and watch closely for any symptoms of disease.
- ~ Good sanitation is important. Clean up and dispose of fallen diseased leaves and remove blighted and cankered twigs and branches.
- ~ Avoid overhead watering.
- ~ If infection with *P. ramorum* is **CONFIRMED** by a laboratory test, remove and destroy the infected plant material where practical.

Select non-chemical management options as your first choice!

Chemical Management

IMPORTANT: Visit Home and Garden Fact Sheets for more information on using pesticides

None recommended

Camellia: Ramorum leaf and shoot blight (Sudden oak death)

Images



~ Caption: *P. ramorum* symptoms on *Camellia sinensis* leaves
~ Photo by: M. Elliott



~ Caption: *P. ramorum* symptoms on *Camellia japonica* leaves
~ Photo by: M. Elliott