

Branch Dieback of Leyland Cypress

Disease Profile

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Leyland cypress (*x Cupressocyparis leylandii*) is a common, fast-growing ornamental evergreen that serves well as a landscape tree, especially for hedges and screens. It is also grown as a Christmas tree. Branch dieback or canker, caused by the fungus *Seiridium unicorne*, is perhaps the most significant disease on Leyland cypress. Left unchecked, the fungus can move into the main trunk, killing the entire tree. Botryosphaeria canker (*Botryosphaeria dothidea*) produces symptoms similar to *Seiridium* canker. Spores produced by these organisms are disseminated by splashing water from irrigation or rainfall. Infection occurs through wounds on the tree. These canker diseases can kill large sections of the plant in the spring and summer during periods of frequent rainfall or high humidity.

The most obvious indication of the disease is the browning and subsequent dieback of a leader or major side branch. Sunken, dark brown cankers or patches develop on the infected branches near the transition area of healthy and diseased tissues. Small black fruiting bodies of the fungus can often be seen within these areas. Extensive resin ooze on diseased branches. When branches are wet, the fungus advances rapidly, killing tissue in its wake.

Sanitation is the first line of defense. All infected portions should be pruned about two inches below the canker and destroyed. Since the disease is often associated with drought stress, make sure the plants have adequate soil moisture, but avoid overhead water. There are no effective chemical controls available.

**[See Extension Fact Sheet FSA7536](#)

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