

BLACK KNOT DISEASE, ORNAMENTAL CHERRY AND PLUM

Black knot is a fungal disease that causes hard, black woody growths to encircle the stems of ornamental and edible cherry and plum trees. These corky outgrowths should be pruned out and destroyed BEFORE LEAF BUD BREAK IN SPRING. If pruning is done any other time, the fungus will spread rampantly. Knots are greenish and soft when newly formed, but they become hard and black with age. Old knots may be covered with a white or pink parasitic fungus during the summer, and may be infested with insects.

It is imperative to prune at least 4-6" below each knot because the fungus grows beyond the edge of the knot itself. If pruning is not possible because knots are present on major scaffold limbs or on the trunk, they can be removed by cutting away the diseased tissue down to healthy wood and out at least 1/2" beyond the edge of the knot. Gather and remove the pruned wood with the knots before April 1st since these cut stems can be a source of inoculum if left near the tree. Dip or sterilize any pruning instrument with either 70% rubbing alcohol or 1 part bleach to 9 parts of water. Sterilize between every cut! While pruning of the infected wood is necessary, control measures must also include a very structured fungicide spray program. Both pruning and preventative fungicides must be coordinated to be successful!

In spring, spores are initially discharged from fungal fruiting bodies along the surface of the branches. These spores may become airborne when buds first swell on the tree. The flower buds may be tiny "beads" tight to the bark. This is when to spray the first time. Make a second spray about the time

the flower buds show some "pink" and are separating into individual blooms. Spray every 5 days throughout the blooming period and continue until the terminal LEAF buds have opened into normal sized leaves. Spores are carried by wind and rain to the site of infection, where they germinate. Some knots appear by late summer; others do not appear until the following spring. Use Ferti.lome's Liquid Systemic Fungicide (Propiconazole) at the rate of 3-4 tbsp per gallon. This is what our field managers have determined to give the best control.

