

Cypress trees are not a good choice for Redding area, and this fungus is why

Leimone Waite, Master Gardener, Jan. 05, 2018

Q: I have a row of Leyland cypress that have small dead limbs scattered about the trees. Some are near the top, some are in the middle and some are in the bottom portions of each tree. Can you tell me what is wrong with my trees and what I can do to save them?

A: Unfortunately, it sounds like your trees may have cypress canker, *seiridium cardinale*, a fungal disease that infects primary cypress species. Leyland cypress are especially susceptible to it. Cypress canker causes sunken cankers with sometimes resinous lesion to form on the limb. The bark will discolor to black or purple along the dying limb. If you cut into this area the wood should also be discolored. As this is a fungal disease it tends to show up randomly in the tree, causing brown spots to show up all over the tree as small limbs die back.

The hot dry temperatures of Redding stress the trees and make them even more venerable to the cypress canker. This past summer's unrelenting hot temperatures seem to have caused more of an outbreak of the canker diseases.

I have noticed a spread of the *botryosphaeria* canker in our campus giant sequoia and Japanese cedar trees. The UC IPM site says "do not plant species that are poorly adapted to local conditions. *Botryosphaeria* canker of giant sequoia, Chinese elm anthracnose canker, and cypress canker of Leyland and Monterey cypress are virtually unavoidable when their hosts are poorly located; planting other species or resistant cultivars is the only practical management strategy."

But if you already have an established row of these trees, there are some things you can do to try to prevent the disease from killing them.

To manage the disease, try cutting out the cankers if you can do so without removing large limbs. Cut on the branch below the canker so that only healthy wood is left. Make sure to sanitize your pruning equipment in between cuts. Wipe with or dip tools in 70 percent Isopropyl or Ethanol alcohol to disinfect.

Do not leave removed limbs laying around. Remove them from the property entirely, as you do not want the fungal disease to continue to spread. It can be spread by the wind from branch to branch or tree to tree.

Keep your trees well-watered even during the winter if we do not get rain for two or three weeks. Do not over water as that can have just as much of a negative effect on the tree as the lack of water. Mulch under the trees to help manage water stress and keep the roots cool during the summer. Make sure to fertilize trees twice a year — in early spring and again in early fall. Use a complete fertilizer with low amounts of nitrogen as new growth maybe more susceptible to the canker.

If the infection is bad, you may want to consult a certified arborist. There have been some positive results with injections of nutrients applied directly into the tree. Chemical controls do not appear to work on this disease.