

Sappy Bark – Papery Bark (*Trametes versicolor*)

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Sappy bark, also called papery bark, is a fungal disease of apple that occurs on older trees in most growing areas. It appears frequently in Sonoma County especially the Sebastopol area in older trees. It is a particular problem when trees have been abandoned or improperly pruned.

The sappy bark fungus enters limbs and larger branches at pruning cuts. Infected bark and wood tissues decay, becoming spongy and discolored. Affected bark frequently peels away, exposing decayed tissue beneath. During damp weather, affected bark appears spongy; when it is dry it looks papery. Dark sap sometimes oozes from diseased areas. Bracket-like, spore-producing structures may form along the edges of affected areas. Sappy bark cankers can girdle branches, or if infections are located on the trunk, they can girdle and kill the tree. The cankers grow a few inches a year, thus they can be removed long before they cause major damage.

To reduce the incidence of sappy bark, maintain your trees and good vigor and always make pruning cuts flush with the limb. Leave no stubs when pruning; these can be invaded by the fungus. If diseased bark and wood are present in the tree, cut them away and burn them. Only prune trees during dry weather as rain and wind can spread fungal spores to the cut surfaces. Weather should be dry for at least 48 hours to allow for the surfaces to dry out. If pruning is done during rainy periods, the cut surfaces can be treated with fixed copper sprays, similar to what is used for dormant fruit trees disease control. Trees can be invigorated by maintaining good weed control, applications of fertilizers or compost, and by giving the trees some supplemental irrigation.





