

Plane Tree Wilt (Canker Stain of Plane) – *Ceratocystis platani*



The ascomycete fungus *Ceratocystis platani* causes canker stain, also known as plane tree wilt, on several plane species, including London plane (*Platanus x acerifolia*) and its parents, *P. orientalis* and *P. occidentalis*.

It originates from the eastern United States. Although it has not been detected in the UK, it has been reported in several European countries, with serious losses of shade trees reported in Greece and south-east France, where trees have died within 3–7 years.

C. platani infection causes pronounced xylem staining, severe wilting and tree death. It could pose a significant risk in the UK, where plane is an important urban amenity species.

It can be easily spread through the movement of infected material (e.g. sawdust, soil, wood), contaminated tools and in water. The fungus produces resilient, long-lived spores which can persist in soil and on unsterilised pruning tools.



Don't give
pests and
diseases
an easy ride



If you think you have spotted a case of this disease, you must report it through our Tree Alert online form at:
[forestry.gov.uk/treealert](https://www.forestry.gov.uk/treealert)

Plane tree wilt can be easily spread by human activity such as tree felling and pruning. We can all help to slow its spread by practising good biosecurity.



Think kit

Clean and disinfect any equipment and PPE which has been used on trees, especially trees suspected to be affected by a pest or disease. Equipment used abroad should be sterilised before going, and again before returning.



Think transport

Movements of infected soil and sawdust on vehicles and machinery are primary pathways for spreading this disease. All machinery and vehicles should therefore be jet washed to remove any soil before leaving sites where it is suspected.



Think trees

All plane plants imported from elsewhere in the European Union must be accompanied by a plant passport. All landings of plane tree plants must be notified to the Animal Plant Health Agency (APHA) to enable inspection.

Symptoms Guide: Plane Wilt (Canker Stain of Plane)



Chlorotic foliage

The first visible symptoms will be sudden wilting and chlorosis (yellowing) of foliage, usually on a single branch, leading to more extensive dieback of the crown. Infection through root grafts can lead to sudden die-back of the whole crown.



Radial discoloration

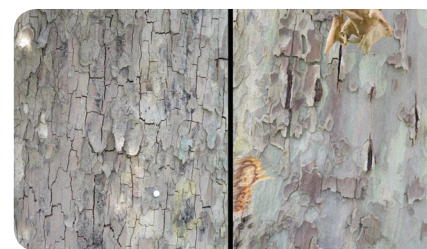
In cross-section, black discoloration of the parenchymatic rays might be visible, extending radially in to the sapwood. This is a key indicator of *C. eratocystis platani* infection.

(Photo: Nikoleta Soulioti, FRIA, Greece)

Longitudinal cracks and lateral blistering

A canker might be visible in thin-barked trees through a change in the bark. There can be small, longitudinal cracks or lateral blisters between areas of healthy and necrotic (dying) tissue.

Vertical cracks can also be seen during the spring growth period.



Sunken lesions and vertical cracks

These can indicate *C. platani* infection, but can also be caused by other pathogens or external factors. Sunken bark lesions can appear on younger, thin-barked trees. Where *C. platani* is the cause, the margin of the canker displays orange/purple streaking. Wetting the bark can help when looking for these symptoms.



Necrosis under the bark

A sharp line of change between healthy, light green or pink tissue and necrotic, dark brown tissue under the bark indicates the presence of a canker. Cankers caused by *C. platani* will show no signs of compartmentalisation.

Other causes of similar symptoms

Fomitiporia punctata (also known as *Phellinus punctatus*), has been found on London planes in South East England since 2008. *F. punctata* causes lesions on the bark, but the tree will usually compartmentalise the infected wood. The flat, buff fruiting bodies of this fungi are sometimes visible.



(Photo: Prof Lucio Montecchio, University of Padova, Italy)

For more details, please visit www.forestry.gov.uk/planetreethreats