



PLANT DISEASES

TUBERCULARIA (NECTRIA) DIEBACK OF BROADLEAF TREES

The fungus *Tubercularia* is often found associated with dead twigs and branches of maple, vine maple, and other ornamental maples. Elm, silk tree (*Albizia* or *Mimosa*), and other broadleaf trees including fruit trees, may also be infected.

The fungus is easily identified by the presence of many small, pink to coral bumps on the dead bark of the affected twig or branch (Fig. 1). The bumps contain thousands of spores of the fungus. Sometimes the perfect, or *Nectria*, stage is found on the dead bark. This stage consists of clusters of tiny, red, spherical bodies. The *Tubercularia* stage is by far the most common and diagnostic stage.

This fungus is generally considered a weak pathogen, incapable of doing significant damage on its own. It is thought that the fungus enters bark or wood which has already been injured by other factors such as cold, drought, and pruning wounds, and causes additional, though minor, damage. The fungus also has the ability to grow on dead tissue.

Control of *Tubercularia* dieback is generally achieved by pruning out and destroying the dead branches. Be careful to prune several inches below the dead area, and not to get any of the fungus on the shears. If the shears become contaminated, they will spread the fungus to other pruning wounds, resulting in more infection. To sterilize pruning shears, dip in rubbing alcohol. Wash in soap and water before dipping, if possible.

Prepared by Roy M. Davidson, Jr., research technologist, and Ralph S. Byther, Extension plant pathologist, Western Washington Research and Extension Center, Puyallup.

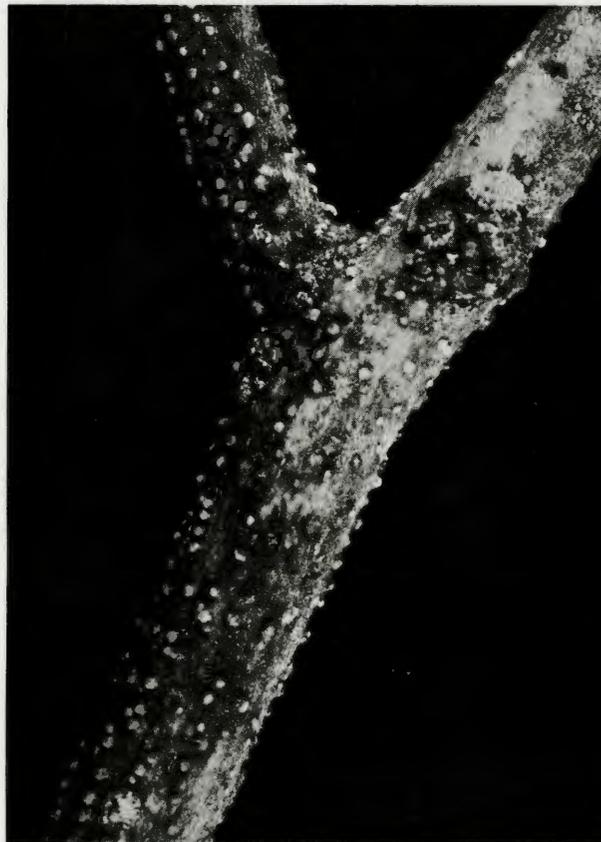


Fig. 1. Many small, pink to coral bumps on the dead bark identify *Tubercularia* dieback.

Assistance from Washington State University is available to all persons, without regard to race, color, or national origin.

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In cooperation with the United States Department of Agriculture

Issued in furtherance of the Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914, by the Washington State University

Cooperative Extension Service. J. O. Young, Director

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