CHESTERMERE

Bronze Leaf Disease (BLD)

Since 2007 there has been a new fungal disease in the Calgary area known as BLD or Bronze Leaf Disease (Apioplagiostoma populi). The disease attacks Swedish columnar aspen, tower poplars and a few other poplar/aspen varieties.

Bronze Leaf Disease is an airborne fungus that lives on trees and spreads in the spring through infected debris and branches. This disease first shows up in the lower 2/3 of the tree. During leaf out in the spring the disease can be VERY hard to identify as the aspen leaves may look stunted and or weak end.

As the season progresses the edges of leaves on the infected branches will then begin to turn reddish or brown but the veins of the leaves will remain bright and colored. By midsummer the whole leaf will have turned dark in colour with the veins of the leaves still remaining coloured. By late summer the entire branch may look dark chocolate brown to bronze in colour and the leaves may even stay on throughout the winter. Left uncared for, the tree can die in as little as 3 years while spreading the fungus to neighbouring trees.

Preventing BLD in Chestermere

The City of Chestermere is doing what we can to identify and prune any infected trees we have in our parks and boulevards. However, our resources are limited and we are only able to monitor and maintain the trees on town property. Residents can also help stop the spread by monitoring and caring for the trees on your property. If you are concerned that you may have Bronze Leaf Disease on your aspen or poplar trees, contact a local tree care specialist as soon as possible. BLD can be hard to identify as there are a few other poplar and aspen diseases that have similar symptoms.
Bronze leaf can be controlled and maintained but once infected the tree cannot rid itself of the fungus as it moves systemically throughout the tree. BLD also cannot yet be chemically treated as there are no fungicides available for this disease.

Controlling BLD

To control BLD you should promote tree health and prune out the infected branches a minimum of 20cm (8 inches) below the lowest visible sign of infection. Be sure to sanitize your tools after EVERY cut as infection may be spread by pruning with infected tools. Disinfection can be done by soaking your tools for a minute with a 10% bleach solution or 70% rubbing alcohol. Take all infected wood leaves and debris to the landfill to be disposed of. DO NOT use the clippings for mulch chip for ground cover or use for firewood as any of these actions may allow the disease to spread to new areas.

To find a list of ISA tree care professionals visit www.treesaregood.org.
More information is available on the Government of Alberta, City of Grande Prairie, and City of Calgary websites.
Source: Government of Alberta, City of Grande Prairie, City of Calgary

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