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Eastern Filbert Blight

A Threat to Northwest Filbert Orchards

Eastern Filbert Blight, a fungus disease, has been kept from western filbert orchards for the past 50 years by plant quarantine. Now it has been found in Clark and Cowlitz counties of Washington and Columbia County, Oregon. The disease can kill entire orchards and seems likely to spread if not identified and contained.

Oregon State University, Washington State University, and the State Departments of Agriculture in Washington and Oregon, along with the Oregon Filbert Commission, are working to identify the disease and check its spread. If you find Eastern Filbert Blight in your orchard or if you need assistance in identifying the disease, please call your County Extension office.

This disease is caused by a fungus, *Apioportha anomala*, and should not be confused with the more common Bacterial Blight of filberts. The fungus attacks stems and twigs of the cultivated European filbert grown in the Pacific Northwest, as well as the wild American hazel of the eastern United States. It has not been reported attacking the wild beaked hazel of the Pacific Coast.

The fungus attacks the new twigs first, but later involves the large limbs. Eventually most of the tree above the soil line is killed. The pollenizer varieties Daviana and DuChilly appear to be most susceptible and may be the first trees in an orchard to show symptoms of the disease. Suckers and shoots near pruning cuts seem to be most susceptible.

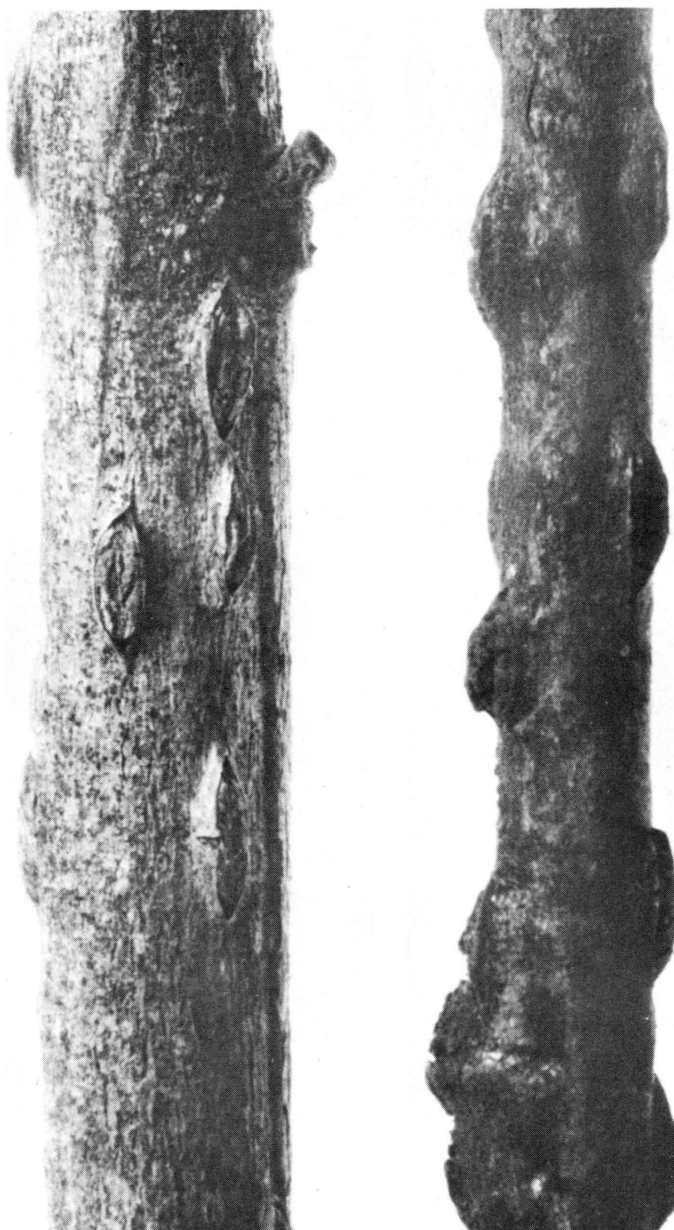
The fungus infects the bark, which turns dark. Twigs and branches become girdled, and the leaves beyond the infected area may wither. At this point symptoms are similar to those caused by most canker-producing organisms. Later, the spore-producing pustules of the fungus break out in lines through the dead bark. Pustules are round or oval, distinctly raised above the surface of the bark. Each pustule is about 1/8 inch wide and 1/4 to 1/3 inch long, appearing in almost straight rows lengthwise along the branch.

Cause

Spores of the fungus apparently are spread in the orchard by wind and rain. It is not known how the disease spreads over greater distances, but it may be carried on leaves, twigs, or infected wood transported to new areas.

Control

No control of the fungus has been found, but diseased portions of wood should be pruned and burned to reduce the number of spores and check the spread.



Filbert shoots showing new pustules, left, and old pustules, right.



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