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## Tree Diseases in Your Landscape

My recently published column on the arborvitae leafminer generated an overwhelming response from readers. As I talked with readers about this pest, questions about the Leyland Cypress were also very popular.

Diseases of trees are often a point of major concern among homeowners. According to Dr. Alan Windham, UT Extension Plant Pathologist, tree diseases are most often aesthetic and don't have a long term effect on the tree's health. Occasionally, a disease may disfigure a tree and possibly even kill the tree.

Some of the most commonly noticed tree diseases are what we refer to as "leaf spot diseases" such as Tar spot and Bull's eye leaf spot on maple, Scab on crabapple, and Shot hole disease on ornamental cherry. The damage from these diseases is usually only cosmetic. Anthracnose, which affects dogwood, maple, sycamore, and ash, can show up especially following cool, wet weather in late spring resulting in a partial defoliation. Windham says trees can be stressed and potentially fatally if defoliated repeatedly.

Powdery mildew, which causes white to gray fungal growth on leaves, can be seen on oak, poplar, sycamore, crabapple, and dogwood. This disease is mainly a threat to dogwood due to its early-season emergence and its impact on tree vigor. There are disease resistant varieties such as Appalachian Spring, which are resistant to Powdery mildew.

Sooty mold is another common occurrence in the landscape. This is a black fungal growth that occurs on the honey dew, produced by scale insects and aphids. Plants, harboring these insects, are more likely to have sooty mold. We commonly see this on the trunks of maple, leaves of holly and many other plants. This can be controlled by chemically managing the insects that feed on the plants as well as washing off the mold.

Canker diseases, such as Seridium canker and Botryosphaeria canker, afflict Leyland Cypress. This disease shows up first by random dieback on stressed cypress. If not managed, the disease can move to the trunk and kill the tree. Swollen or bleeding branches are an indication of these canker diseases. The only management for these cankers is to minimize stress by mulching and watering when dry. The diseased branches must be routinely pruned below the damage to prevent further spread. Pruners should be sterilized between trees. Black knot on plum and cherry is another type of canker disease.

Overall, many tree diseases exist in the ornamental landscape which are often only cosmetic. Many diseases can be prevented by planting resistant varieties. Fungicide applications are rarely an option as they are only affective when sprayed preventatively.