

European stone fruit yellows

What is it?

European stone fruit yellows (ESFY) is caused by a pathogenic phytoplasma. It infects almonds in Spain, and feral and amenity almonds in Germany. Apricots, peaches, Japanese plums (European plums are symptomless hosts) and several weeds are also susceptible. Decline and death of affected Prunus trees has occurred within 24 months of first symptoms, however almonds do not appear to be as quickly or severely affected.

Natural spread of the pathogen occurs via vectors, with Cicadellids presumed to be the most important ones. Reservoir hosts of both the pathogen and the vector are important for pest spread.

There is no in-field control for infected trees, however management of vectors provides a reduction in pathogen spread.

What to look for?

An early sign of infection is the emergence of new growth during dormancy. Infected trees leaf out before flowers open.



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Necrosis of the vascular tissue of an ESFY infected Prunus tree



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Chlorosis and rolling of peach leaves on a shoot affected by ESFY (right) compared to unaffected peach (left).

Where is it found?

This pathogen is prevalent throughout Europe. Wild and reservoir hosts maintain the pathogen which has epidemic potential in conducive conditions.



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Prunus tree affected by ESFY (left) showing early defoliation and decline compared to an unaffected tree (right)



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Development of corky tissue along a lateral vein of a peach leaf affected by ESFY

In summer, look for pale, longitudinally-rolled leaves that droop downwards. They become thickened, and have a rough and stiff texture.

Infected trees defoliate early and over time lose their vigour. This can be followed by dieback within 2-5 years of the first symptoms.

The likelihood of early detection of the pest can be increased through surveillance of neighbouring native vegetation for potential vectors.

What is the best protection for my orchard?

Ensure planting material is pest-free, as infected budwood is the most likely entry pathway. Maintain good orchard hygiene practices to reduce potential vector levels.

Observe orchard trees closely for out-of-season leaf out, and monitor all neighbouring vegetation for increased vector levels.

Neglected orchards and feral almonds should be reported to your local department of primary industries.

Check your orchard frequently for the presence of new pests and unusual symptoms. Make sure you are familiar with common pests so you can tell if you see something different.

**If you see anything unusual,
call the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline
on 1800 084 881.**

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