What is plum pox virus?
Plum pox (also known as Sharka) is caused by the Plum pox virus (Potyvirus). It infects many Prunus, though there may be different strains of the virus that are host specific.

What can it be confused with?
Symptoms vary widely and some may be confused with abiotic stress symptoms such as nutrient deficiency.

What should I look for?
Symptoms depend very much on locality and season and may appear on trunks, leaves or fruits. Symptoms are particularly clear on leaves in spring: chlorotic spots, bands or rings and vein clearing. Trunks can show splitting and fruit may drop off prematurely.

How does it spread?
Spread within orchards or to neighbouring orchards occurs via aphid vectors such as Aphis spiraecola and Myzus persicae. Long distance dispersal (and the most likely means of entry into Australia) is through importation of propagation material that has been grafted with wood from infected Prunus trees.

Where is it now?
Plum pox virus is widespread throughout Europe and was found in Chile in 1992, but has since been eradicated.

How can I protect my orchard from plum pox virus?
Source planting material and orchard inputs only from ‘clean’, accredited suppliers. Check your orchard frequently for the presence of new pests and unusual symptoms. Make sure you are familiar with common cherry pests so you can tell if you see something different.
Internal and external fruit symptoms in apricots, including brownish depressions and grooves on the fruit surface.

E. Levine, Ohio State University, Bugwood.org

Chlorotic spot symptoms on peach fruit.

European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organization Archive, Bugwood.org

Severe symptoms exhibited on plum fruit.

P.J. Chapman, New York State Agricultural Experiment Station, Bugwood.org

DISCLAIMER: The material in this publication is for general information only and no person should act, or fail to act on the basis of this material without first obtaining professional advice. Plant Health Australia and all persons acting for Plant Health Australia expressly disclaim liability with respect to anything done in reliance on this publication.