

## European canker

### What is European canker?

European canker (*Neonectria galligena*), also known as crotch canker or eye rot, is an economically important fungal disease of apples and pears throughout the world causing fruit losses of up to 60%. The fungus has a wide host range, with the main hosts including apple, pear, maple and birch trees.

In 1954 it was introduced into Tasmania, but it was successfully eradicated from Australia by 1991.

### What does it look like?

European canker symptoms are mostly present on branches and trunks of trees. Early signs of infection are reddish brown lesions which develop on small branches, generally around a leaf scar, spur or pruning wound. Symptoms usually present in late spring or early summer.

These lesions elongate into cankers with ring-shaped cracks. The cankers may cause shoot dieback and leaves may wilt or drop prematurely in spring in older trees. In young trees, cankers can girdle the trunks killing the whole tree. The fungus may also result in a rot of the trees and fruit.

### What can it be confused with?

Shoot tip dieback caused by European canker closely resembles the effect of water stress or severe frost. Fruit rotting symptoms also look similar to other fruit rots such as that caused by *Gloeosporium perennans*. Look for cankers on branches and the trunk, which distinguishes European canker from the other disorders.



Lesions develop into cankers on branches

Abrahami



Reddish brown lesions on branches

Abrahami



Canker development may girdle the trunks of young seedlings

William M. Brown Jr., Bugwood.org



### What should I look for?

Look for reddish brown lesions on branches of established trees that may develop into cankers with ring-shaped cracks. Unexplained death of young trees may also indicate the presence of European canker.

### How does it spread?

Spores are spread by wind and rain splash and possibly by insects and birds. Long distance dispersal is more likely through the movement of infected (though often symptomless) fruit.

### Where is it now?

With the exception of Australia, European canker is present in all regions of commercial apple and pear production throughout the world.

### How can I protect my orchard from European canker?

Source plant material only from clean, accredited suppliers, and preferably material that is certified. Check your orchard frequently for the presence of new pests and unusual symptoms. Make sure you are familiar with common pome fruit pests so you can tell if you see something different.

**If you see anything unusual, call the Exotic Plant Pest Hotline**

**EXOTIC PLANT PEST HOTLINE  
1800 084 881**



Severe cankers on branches lead to dieback of the branch

H.J. Larsen, Bugwood.org



Reddish brown lesions on seedling are early symptoms

William M. Brown Jr., Bugwood.org



Dieback of shoot tips

Herb Aldivinckle, Cornell University