



Fire blight in apple trees

Your cooperation is crucial!

What is fire blight?

Fire blight (known in French as *brûlure bactérienne*) is a disease which primarily infects apple, ornamental crab apple, pear, and mountain ash trees. The bacterium that causes the disease is a regulated pest. It can kill an entire tree in a single season.

What symptoms should you look for?

The tree is most often infected in the spring, when in bloom. **The infected branch wilts, turns brown, and shrivels** (see photo below). By the third week of June, these symptoms are easy to recognize.



Symptoms of fire blight on an apple tree

Why does it matter?

Infected trees are likely to contaminate any apple trees in orchards within a 5-kilometre radius. The disease spreads most readily when apple trees are in bloom and pollinating insects spread the bacteria.

Even though the infected trees are not a threat to human health, fire blight can cause considerable economic loss to commercial apple growers (orchards).

Simple steps you can take!

Be careful with trees that are susceptible to fire blight, particularly apple trees, to control the disease, which has reached epidemic proportions in some parts of Quebec.

- If you're thinking of planting trees on your property and your home is near a commercial orchard, it is strongly recommended that you choose plants other than apple, crab apple, or pear trees.
- If you already have trees that are susceptible to fire blight, here are the steps to follow the moment you notice symptoms of the disease:

In dry weather, cut back the branch or spur 30 to 45 centimetres below the visible symptom.

Disinfect your tools with rubbing alcohol after cutting back or pruning.

Let the pruned off branches or spurs dry out, then dispose of them in tightly closed plastic bags.

Watch out for new symptoms, and promptly remove infections as they appear.

If the trunk is attacked, **cut down the tree**.

For more information, please visit this website: www.mapaq.gouv.qc.ca/brulurebacterienne. There is also an Ontario ministry of agriculture (OMAFRA) site at <http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/facts/fireblight.htm#symptoms>

What the law says...

The Quebec *Crop Health Protection Act** requires any person to take appropriate measures to make sure that plants they own or have in their care do not spread regulated pests or other harmful organisms to a commercial crop.

Failure to comply with the Act may result in a fine. In some cases, an authorized inspector may order infected trees cut down, at the owner's expense.



WHO CAN HELP?

- Your municipality
- Your garden centre
- An agronomist or professional tree pruner

* *Loi sur la protection sanitaire des cultures*

