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Arboriculture

RESEARCH and
INFORMATION NOTE

The Health of Non-Woodland Trees in England in 2001 & 2002

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Summary

Reports of pests, diseases and disorders of trees received during 2001 and 2002 are reviewed. The data were collated from two source; from advisory enquiries processed at the Forestry Commission's two Research Centres in Surrey and Midlothian, and records received through the 'Condition Survey of Non-Woodland Amenity Trees.' This survey, sponsored by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, provides a quantitative basis for monitoring year-to-year changes in tree condition. Notable occurrences in 2001 were the high levels of willow scab (*Venturia (Pollaccia) saliciperda*) and increasing levels of red band needle blight (*Mycosphaerella pini*) on Corsican pine in East Anglia in 2001 and 2002. Phytophthora diseases were widely reported in both years, with yews (*Taxus* spp.) particularly badly affected in some areas. Bleeding cankers became an increasingly common concern on horse chestnut.

Introduction

1. In 1993 Forest Research, an agency of the Forestry Commission, set up a project funded at the time by the Department of the Environment, and now supported by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. Its aim was to monitor the health of amenity trees in English city centres, urban parks and gardens, and in rural estates. In a series of 100 observation plots throughout England, volunteers assess the condition of the trees each July or August. The structure of the project has changed slightly over the years, but in its current form individual trees are selected and monitored annually at each plot.
2. Volunteers choose at least 6 genera from a list of 16 (see **Appendix 1**), to make up their plot, and assess a minimum of 30 individual trees. *Tilia* species were the most commonly chosen trees to assess, although overall the balance between species in the survey was good, with all except *Chamaecyparis* represented in at least 10 plots. The volunteers look at a range of tree pests and diseases, and general indications of tree condition, using in most cases a simple scoring system running from 0, indicating no symptoms, to 3, severe symptoms. (See **Appendix 2**: example of a completed assessment form). Some types of damage, requiring more specialist diagnosis, are not included on the assessment forms, but are assessed and recorded by advisory staff within Forest Research's Pathology and Entomology Branches.

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3. In addition, special plots are set up to allow more detailed observations of crown density in oak (*Quercus robur* and *Q. petraea*) and beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), and these provide a comparison with measurements taken for the Forest Condition Survey, also conducted by Forest Research.
4. This note summarises the reports received in 2001 and 2002 from 66 and 71 plots respectively across England, augmented by information from Forest Research's Disease Diagnostic and Advisory Service (DDAS) and Advisory Entomologist. This includes casebook data from woodland as well as non-woodland trees. Some of the tree problems covered in these reports have been described in the Tree Damage Alerts listed at the end of this Note.