SYCAMORE ANTHRACNOSE
(Leaf and Twig Blight)

Sycamore anthracnose is about the only serious disease affecting sycamores and plane-trees. The disease is common throughout the state where sycamores are grown. All of the plane-trees are susceptible. Some reports indicate that American plane-trees or sycamore, *Platanus occidentalis*, and Western sycamore (California plane-tree), *P. racemosa*, are most susceptible, and that London plane-tree, *P. acerifolia*, and Oriental plane-tree, *P. orientalis*, are somewhat more resistant. However, there is some question if any of the four species is more resistant than the others.

The disease can appear as soon as the leaves emerge from the buds in the spring. The most characteristic symptom is a crinkling and browning of the leaves. Entire younger leaves may be killed and then fall. These symptoms are very similar to those caused by late spring frost injury. Infections on older leaves are most common along the veins.

Later, after the leaves have developed, infection of the leaf stem may occur, and leaves will fall even though no symptoms can be seen on the leaf. A severely infected tree may be infected and defoliated several times in a single season.

Small twigs and branches may also be affected, and cankers may eventually girdle and kill the infected branch. This will result in the production of many small shoots from the area just below the girdled portion of the branch, giving that part of the tree a bushy look. Sycamore blight is caused by the fungus *Gnomonia veneta*. Masses of spores are produced on cankers and infected leaves. Spores are spread by rain and wind to healthy leaves, buds, and twigs where new infections can start. The fungus overwinters on fallen leaves and twigs, and in branch and twig cankers.

Control. Fallen leaves and twigs should be raked up and destroyed. Diseased branches and twigs should be pruned out and destroyed. These operations can remove

![Fig. 1—Crinkling and browning of leaves is similar to frost injury.](image-url)
much of the overwintering stage of the fungus, thus limiting the number of spores being produced to start new infections. Care should be taken to sterilize pruning shears in rubbing alcohol or other disinfectant after pruning infected twigs and branches.

Adequate fertilizer and water should be applied to maintain the vigor of the tree, and to stimulate the production of new foliage.

Where anthracnose is known to be a problem each year, it can be controlled by a fungicidal spray program. Benlate, Dodine, and Kocide 101 are registered for use. These fungicides are only available in large packages (2-5 lbs) and are not usually available at local garden centers. They can be purchased at farm and feed stores or commercial outlets. They should be applied in the spring to protect buds and newly developing foliage. Spraying should begin when the buds are swelling and the bud caps begin to break. A second application should be made 10 to 14 days later. Be sure and follow all label directions on the fungicide you choose.

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