

## **Advice on Ash Dieback**

You've probably noticed road closures for tree felling around the Cotswolds over the past few months. Much of this is because of Ash Dieback, which is posing a huge problem right across the UK. We hope the following information will be of use.

### **What is Ash Dieback?**

This is a fungal disease, sometimes known as Ash Chalara (chuh-LAH-rah) which affects the tree's ability to draw nutrients into its upper branches. Young ash trees (*Fraxinus excelsior*) are killed very rapidly by the disease. Older trees will often resist the disease for longer but will eventually succumb if they are exposed to it.

### **How serious is it?**

Very serious indeed. If an infected ash tree is close to a footpath or bridleway, or to buildings, roads and powerlines, it **MUST** be removed because of the danger posed by falling branches or even the collapse of the whole tree. The National Trust is scheduled to remove 7,000 trees in the Cotswolds alone over the next year. It is estimated that 90 per cent of Britain's 80 million ash trees will be affected, changing the landscape forever.

### **How does it spread?**

Like all fungi, it is spread via spores, which are carried on the wind. Infection over greater distances can be the result of diseased trees being imported from elsewhere in the UK or abroad. Transporting infected logs and leaf litter may also spread the disease.

### **How do I know whether my ash tree has dieback?**

Leaf loss and crown dieback are the classic signs. Scars and cankers may appear on the bark. A typical symptom is the diamond stem scar – a long vertical diamond-shaped area on the trunk. Leaves may wilt in summer, but these black leaves don't drop as quickly as healthy leaves in autumn.

### **What should I do?**

If you have an ash tree on your property, inspect it regularly. If you are concerned about a tree, you should refer it to an approved and qualified arboriculturist. You can find a professional tree surgeon at the [Arboricultural Association \(www.trees.org.uk\)](http://www.trees.org.uk).

Act now to minimise the landscape impact of ash tree loss - start planting new trees and taking better care of existing trees.

### **Will every single ash tree be cut down?**

The Woodland Trust advises that, where they do not pose a danger, infected ash trees should be left where possible. Even dead, they remain a vital habitat for many species including birds, beetles and lichens.

### **I have more than one ash tree in my garden. Will they all be affected?**

Sadly, it is very likely, though some may prove more resistant than others.

### **Will it spread to other trees?**

There have been reports of ash dieback affecting Phillyrea (mock privet) and Chionanthus. Mountain ash is not affected; this is the common name for members of the Sorbus genus, or rowans, which are not related to ash (Fraxinus).

**I want to plant a replacement tree. What would be a good disease-resistant and wildlife-friendly alternative?**

Aspen, alder, field maple, sycamore, birch, rowan and the disease-resistant elm *Ulmus* 'New Horizon' are all good contenders. In terms of pollen and nectar production, flowering time, fruit type and tree height, elm is the closest match, followed by birch and rowan. Ash trees have a big impact on soil quality because their leaves are nutrient-rich and decompose very rapidly. Alder and lime leaves have similar qualities, and to a lesser extent sycamore, field maple and aspen.

Reduce the risks of introducing new diseases by only planting trees grown in Britain by reputable nurseries, preferably from seed sourced locally.

Structural diversity is also important, so consider planting or encouraging smaller trees or shrubs such as crab apple, holly, hawthorn and rowan. These produce heavy crops of flowers and berries and are excellent for wildlife.

**Councillors Neil Clegg and Victoria Summerley – (Bibury Parish Council).**