



ALABAMA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SYSTEM/ LIMESTONE COUNTY OFFICE

**The Garden Spot
For week of July 20, 2009**

Leyland Cypresses Are Struggling

Many homeowners and commercial developers have used Leyland Cypress Trees as a screen, specimen tree, or even hedge. They are graceful and have attractive dark green foliage and rapid growth. They can reach a height of 70 feet or more, and because of these characteristics, grace many yards in our area. However, in recent years, Leyland Cypress Trees have suffered from several diseases which not only damage, but kill these popular trees.

Leyland Cypress is best adapted to fertile, moist, well-drained soils. Unfortunately, they are often planted on poorly drained sites. Since they have relatively shallow root systems, they may be weakened when exposed to prolonged periods of drought during Alabama's blistering hot summers. And if the trees are spaced too closely (which is common) they become stressed and the risk of fungal-based cankers and other diseases results. This year we are seeing a lot of evidence of canker in the Leyland Cypress. Keep in mind that we are still seeing stress resulting from the hot dry summers in 2006 & 2007.

The most noticeable symptoms of canker is yellowing or browning of the foliage. The discoloration may appear at any time of the year, but is

most likely to be seen in the spring. The disease continues until a considerable portion of the tree is killed. Look for a canker at the base of a dead shoot or branch.

The fungus invades the trees through wounds on the twigs and branch base. Warm and wet weather favor infection.

If you see evidence of the canker, immediately remove the cankered twigs to prevent further disease spread. If the main trunk is damaged, the tree should be removed.

When pruning or taking cuttings, dip the pruning knife or shears in alcohol or germicidal soap. No fungicides are recommended for the control of canker on Leyland Cypress.

Cercospora Needle Blight is another challenge of the Leyland Cypress. It is caused by a fungus and starts as a browning of the scales or needles on the lower branches near the base of the tree and progresses upward and outward. At advanced stages of the disease, all scales except the current year's growth die. This fungal disease is spread by air currents and can be controlled by fungicides.

While the Leyland Cypress may solve many of our landscaping challenges, we need to watch them closely. If you see signs of any of these problems, treat them as soon as possible.

If you are thinking about planting Leyland Cypress trees, minimize the impact of transplant shock by establishing new plantings in the fall. Till an area 3 to 4 times the diameter of the root ball, adjust soil fertility and pH according to soil test results, and add well-rotted pine bark or sawdust. Always set Leyland cypress so that the root ball sits at or just above the soil level.

For more information on Diseases of Leyland Cypress, stop by the Limestone County office of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System at

1109 W. Market Street in Athens and request copies of Extension publications: "Canker & Dieback Diseases of Leyland Cypress" (ANR-1160) and/or Cercospora Needle Blight on Leyland Cypress (ANR-1196). You may also print these publications out yourself through the website www.aces.edu/publications .

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Healthy Leyland Cypress



Leyland Cypress with Canker Disease