

## Aleppo pine blight

Aleppo pines are among the more popular conifers used in desert landscapes. Although pines are not native to our desert, they are moderately hardy here. Once established, they can deal with heat and tolerate freezing temperatures as well. Since they grow quickly, they are an attractive option for new homes. They tend to be prettier when young and get scraggly with age, which does give them character.

At times, even a hardy tree shows indications of suffering. Winter is one of those times.

There is a problem known as Aleppo Pine Blight, where trees show brown patches scattered throughout or the youngest needles on certain branches turn brown. Curiously, although the needles may die, the twigs stay green. While it can be unsightly, it is not fatal.

Some years, the problem is more severe than in others. Younger trees tend to be more sensitive than mature ones.

For years, there has been controversy about its cause. Once, people blamed Aleppo Pine blight on mites, cousins of spiders, but no one has found a culprit.

Aleppo pine blight is likely an environmental problem. As a result, no pesticide will cure it.

Many experts now believe that it is not a disease caused by bacteria or fungi, nor insect damage. This is not the same as the devastation from pine beetles, fortunately.

More than one explanation has been proposed for this blight. The difficulty might be due to a sudden change from warm to cold weather, and the plant had insufficient time to enter true winter dormancy. Chilly winds dry out leaves, which will turn brown and drop. Probably the tree experienced a shortage of water and nutrients earlier in the season, and the tree is sacrificing some tissue to maintain the rest.

Similarly, when the weather begins to get warm, the tree may not have sufficient resources to sustain rapid leaf growth, and it permits its excess needles to die back. When air temperatures are high, and the wind is blowing, the tree works harder to pull water from the soil.

When the soil gets too warm, it dries out quickly, and the plant does not obtain water. Without enough water, the plant dries out. If the tree is severely weakened, other problems may follow. Opportunistic organisms, like insects, fungi, and bacteria - can move into a susceptible tree and make a bad situation worse.

A healthy plant will be more resistant to problems, whether they are from insects, bacteria, or the environment.

Problems may be the result of how and where the tree was first planted, and how it has been maintained.

Whenever you put a plant in the ground, make sure that water will drain away from the roots. With too much water, and **poor drainage**, roots rot. If the roots are unhealthy, the plant cannot get the water and nutrients it needs.



Always irrigate an Aleppo deeply. The water should go at least three feet deep. The plant should get more water less often, as long as there is good drainage.

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