

Volume 4, Issue 1
Spring 2024

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Editors: Karey Windbiel-Rojas,
Belinda Messenger-Sikes

Contributors: Lauren Fordyce,
MacKenzie Patton

E-mail:
ucipm-community@ucanr.edu

Online:
ipm.ucanr.edu

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Produced by the Urban and
Community IPM Team of the
University of California Statewide
Integrated Pest Management
Program, with partial funding from
the USDA NIFA CPPM Extension
Implementation Program.

Wet Weather Tree Diseases

After years of drought, we welcome rain in California. But we also recognize that rain can help spread a number of plant diseases. Rain and wind can splash bacteria and fungi from infected leaves, branches, and blossoms to uninfected parts of the tree. The fungal diseases anthracnose, peach leaf curl, scab, shot hole blight, and the bacterial disease fire blight can all be spread by rain splash. This ability to spread by water makes these diseases more common after a wet spring. With 2023 bringing quite a bit of rainfall and 2024 looking similarly wet, we want to focus on some common rain-dispersed diseases.

Anthracnose

Anthracnose affects many trees including almond, citrus, Chinese elm, and ash (Figure 1). In the spring, fungi produce spores on leaves and twigs that can be spread to new growth via water splashing. Under prolonged wet conditions, this cycle of spore production and spread can occur repeatedly. Anthracnose can defoliate trees, although it is not a lethal disease in most of its hosts. Once symptoms develop or become severe in a growing season, anthracnose can't be effectively controlled. It's best to rely on prevention of the disease by planting resistant varieties.

For more information about identification and management of anthracnose, see *Pest Notes: Anthracnose*:

ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7420.html

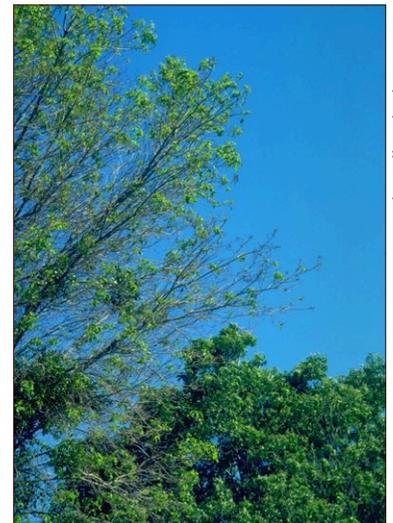


Figure 1. An ash tree defoliated by anthracnose.

Jack Kelly Clark, UCIPM



Figure 2. Peach tree damage caused by peach leaf curl.

Jack Kelly Clark, UCIPM

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Peach leaf curl

Many home gardeners are familiar with the distorted, reddish leaves (Figure 2) caused by peach leaf curl, a disease that affects peach and nectarine trees. The fruit can also be damaged, becoming corky and cracked. Cool, wet weather favors the spread of the disease, but treatment must be started before the spring rains. Preventative sprays should occur after leaf drop but before flower buds swell. Resistant varieties are available to prevent this disease from occurring.

The *Pest Notes: Peach Leaf Curl* provides details about this disease and its treatment.

ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7426.html

Fire blight

Pome fruit trees like pear and apple, and other related trees like pyracantha are often affected by fire blight. This destructive disease spreads in the early spring when rain splashes water from infected leaves and blossoms to healthy plant parts. Pollinators like bees can also spread the disease as they visit blossoms. Symptoms may not be noticeable until later when shoots and flowers shrivel and blacken. New growth is especially vulnerable to infection, so avoid heavy fertilization and pruning during mild wet weather.

The *Pest Notes: Fire Blight*

ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7414.html

contains much more detail on identification and management of this disease.

Scab

Various fungi cause the disease scab, which appears as spots and scabby blemishes on fruit and leaves. Apple scab is especially serious during wet springs and in the cool moist coastal areas of California, although these conditions are also conducive for development of other scab diseases. This disease can ruin the harvest of commercially grown apples and pears but in home gardens, some damage can be tolerated. Limit both apple and pear scab on backyard trees by removing and composting fallen leaves and fruit in the fall.



Figure 3. Shot hole symptoms on apricot leaf and young fruit.

Jack Kelly Clark, UCIPM

Information specifically about apple and pear scab can be found in the *Pest Notes: Apple and Pear Scab*: ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7413.html

For more about other scab diseases, see ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/GARDEN/PLANTS/DISEASES/scab.html.

Shot hole blight

Shot hole blight, also known as Coryneum blight, is caused by the fungus *Wilsonomyces carpophilus*. It affects almonds, apricots, and other *Prunus* species, as well as English laurel. Symptoms appear in the spring as small reddish spots that turn brown and drop out, leaving holes in the leaves (Figure 3). Fruit and twigs can also be affected. Since this disease is worsened by continuous leaf wetting, avoid irrigating foliage. For more information, see the UC IPM page on shot hole blight at ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/GARDEN/FRUIT/DISEASE/shothole.html.

While you can't control the rain from spreading these diseases, good plant care and sanitation practices can help limit the severity. See the publications above as well as other pages on the UC IPM website to find out more—ipm.ucanr.edu.

—Belinda Messenger-Sikes,
Urban IPM Writer/Editor,
bmsikes@ucanr.edu

Need Help Identifying Weeds?

After all the winter rains you may find yourself dealing with weeds and struggling to control them. The first step in successfully controlling weeds is knowing what weed you have. Well, you're in luck: the UC IPM website contains many useful resources to help you identify and manage weeds in the garden or landscape.

A great place to start is the Weed Gallery, which contains images and identification tips for more than 150 common weeds.

If you think you know the name of your weed, you can use the common or scientific name to view photos to confirm identification. Just use the "List of All Weeds" link from the main weed gallery page.

If you don't know what the weed is, the gallery will help you identify the plant using visual characteristics. First, narrow your search by choosing "identification" in the weed category—broadleaf, grass, sedge, or aquatic plant. That will show you a collection of photos in that category.

Select the photo of the plant form or leaf characteristic that resembles your weed (Figure 1) to see another sub-menu of weeds that exhibit more traits of your weed. Scrolling over a thumbnail image on this sub-menu will bring up several photos of the weed—as a seedling and mature plant, its flower, and seeds—to further help you identify it.

Once you think you've identified the weed, click on the linked weed name, which will take you to a photo gallery page. Here you will find details about the weed's habitat, growth characteristics, and life stages. For many weeds, there is a link to the *Pest Notes* that will give you information about its management, both chemical and nonchemical. Each page in the gallery also links to the Calflora website to show where the weed grows in California.

The gallery contains other features as well:

- * Want to know more about plants and their parts? Illustrated tutorials distinguish among broadleaf, grass, and sedge plants and define plant parts used in characterizing certain plant species.

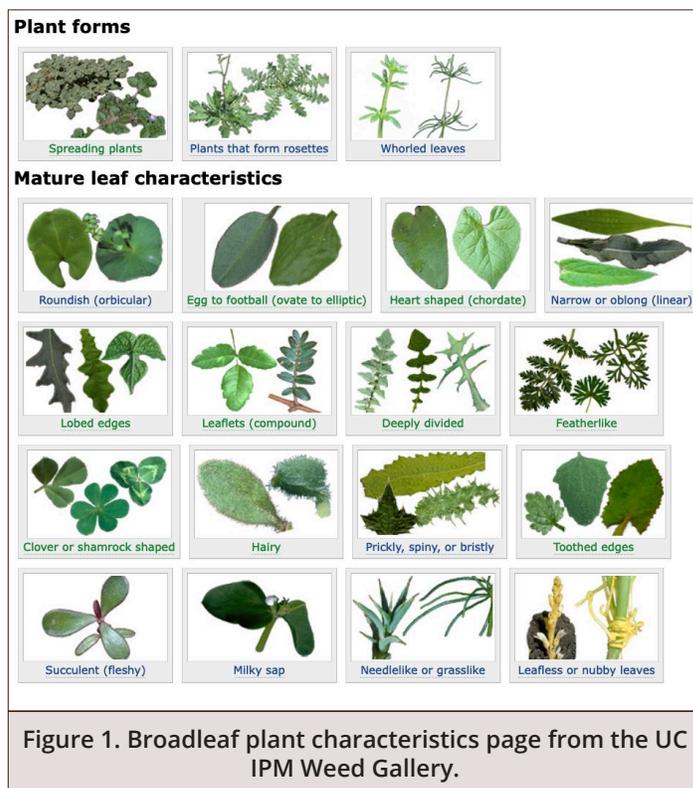


Figure 1. Broadleaf plant characteristics page from the UC IPM Weed Gallery.

- * Need to find out what weeds are in your lawn? The broadleaf and grass categories link to an identification key for common turf weeds.
- * Didn't find your weed? See the weed identification tool under "More information" to search the UC Weed Research & Information Center (WRIC) technical weed key.

You can find the weed gallery page on the left-hand column of the main Home & Landscape page on the UC IPM web site or from the many weed-related pages. To access the weed gallery directly, visit ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/weeds_intro.html.

Visit UC IPM's Weeds library page to find general weed management tips, individual weed-related *Pest Notes*, the Weed Gallery, key to weeds in turf, and other useful resources. ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/menu.weeds.html

—Karey Windbiel-Rojas,
Associate Director
for Urban and Community IPM,
kwindbiel@ucanr.edu

Invasive Pest Spotlight: West Nile Virus

The invasive pest spotlight focuses on emerging or potential invasive pests in California. In this issue we are covering West Nile virus.

West Nile virus facts

West Nile virus disease was first reported in California in 2003 and has become the most common and serious vector-borne disease in California. With the exceptionally wet weather in 2023, reported cases of this mosquito-borne virus doubled compared to the previous year.

West Nile virus is spread by mosquitoes in the genus *Culex*. Usually, the virus passes between mosquitoes and birds, but mosquitoes can also transmit the virus to humans, horses, and other domestic animals (Figure 1).

Because mosquitoes can get the virus from birds, monitoring bird populations and recording dead birds is one of the most important ways to track this disease.

What can you do?

The best way to prevent the spread of West Nile virus is to reduce mosquito populations through controlling the mosquito larval stages.

Whenever possible, standing water should be drained, since mosquito larva can grow in as little as a few ounces of water. Clean gutters and storm drains to ensure water does not collect there.

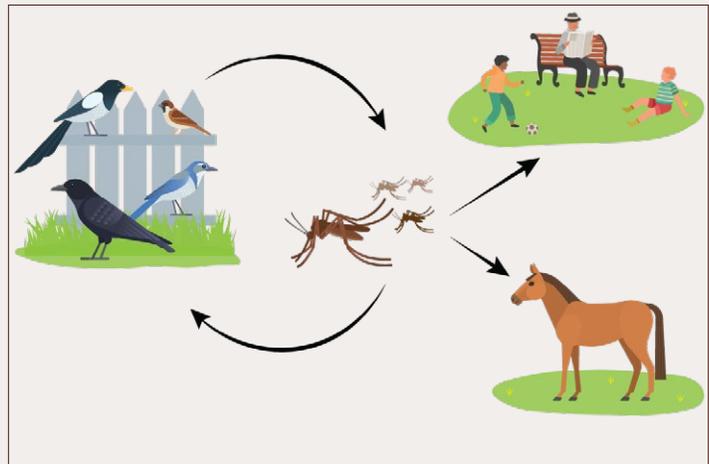


Figure 1. The transmission cycle of West Nile virus. Graphic from www.westnile.ca.gov.

In areas that cannot be drained or mosquito-proofed, such as ponds, neglected pools, or unsealed rain barrels, there are some biocontrol options like *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) that can reduce mosquito populations.

In addition to these preventative measures, protect yourself from adult mosquito bites by using mosquito repellents or wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants.

For more information on mosquito control and protecting yourself from mosquito-borne diseases, visit the UC IPM pages on mosquitoes at ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/mosquitoes.html.

To report dead birds and view more information on West Nile in California, visit westnile.ca.gov.

—MacKenzie Patton,
Central Sierra IPM Advisor,
mfpatton@ucanr.edu

For more information about managing pests, contact your University of California Cooperative Extension office, or visit the UC IPM website at ipm.ucanr.edu.

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