



# Unique Garden Centre

## FIREBLIGHT



This serious and destructive disease is caused by the bacterium *Erwinia amylovora*. It affects pears, apples, crabapples, mountain ash, hawthorn, cotoneaster, plum, chokecherry and Saskatoon.

Symptoms first appear as wilting of blossoms, leaves and new twig growth. Affected parts become brown and shriveled, as if scorched by fire. Leaves often cling to the stem and remain attached well after normal leaf fall. In warm humid weather droplets of a clear amber colored liquid ooze from recently infected parts. Infection in older

branches form into cankers (areas which are darkened, slightly sunken and tend to crack at their edges).

The bacteria over-winter in the cankers on limbs and trunks. In the spring the bacteria is spread by pollinating insects from blossom to blossom, by rain splashed, wind and contaminated pruning shears.

### Follow these steps to control Fireblight:

1. Remove the source of infection immediately. Prune affected twigs or limbs 8-10" below the diseased area since bacteria extend beyond this point. Disinfect pruning equipment between each cut with a 10% bleach solution. Treat cut areas with a tree pruning paint. Burn or remove all infected twigs immediately.
2. Severely infected trees should be removed entirely. If left they serve as a further infection source.
3. Remove root suckers and succulent sprouts as they are very susceptible to infection. Avoid using high nitrogen fertilizer which will promote susceptible growth.
4. Choose fireblight resistant varieties where possible. In apples the following varieties have superior resistance to fireblight: Haralson, Heyer 12, Norland, Parkland, Patterson and Westland. Among crabapple consider Dolgo, Hopa, Makamik, Radiant, Pink Spire and Thunderchild.
5. Streptomycin sulphate, sold as AGRI-STREP, is a protective spray registered for the control of fireblight. Spray three times during the blossom period, applying until the branches drip, for thorough coverage. Apply the first application when 10% of the blossoms have opened, the second when most of the blossoms have opened, and the third when only a few petals remain. Agri-Strep is not a cure for an existing infection, but a preventative control. However, Agri-Strep is available only in commercial quantities and is a special order item and may not be cost effective for the home owner.