

Black Knot Fungus – What Should We Do?

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It was about four years ago today, Dad and I were pruning fruit trees for one of our customers in the Lanfear Hill area of town when we discovered small, rough, black lumps 1-8” in length growing all over the branches of a plum tree. After closer examination and some research we discovered it to Black Knot Fungus (*Dibotryon morbosum*), which is severe on plums and can also infect cherry trees, including the Purple Leaf Sand Cherries (*Prunus x cistina*). Black Knot spores form in warm wet weather, 55-75 degrees, and generally don’t appear for 6 months to a year after infection. The fungus is spread by water dripping from infected branches onto healthy ones, by birds, clothing transferring spores by rubbing on branches, or by not disinfecting your pruning tools regularly. Unfortunately Black Knot has become an epidemic in the Terrace area since we first discovered it 4 years ago, despite our efforts to remove and burn all of the infected branches we found.

So what can you do as a home owner to minimize the impact of Black Knot? Here is the solution:

- Prune off infected branches 6” below infected areas.
- Burn or bag and dispose of all infected branches as soon as possible.
- Disinfect your pruning tools regularly when pruning on infected tree and in between trees.
- Do not prune in the rain or when branches are wet.
- When pruning infected trees wash clothes before touching healthy trees.
- Spray infected trees with lime sulphur at 100ml/l of water at the dormant stage, and then spray again with wettable sulphur at full bloom and in the fall.

Infected trees left uncared for will die, and in the mean time will spread to neighboring trees. Because there is no total cure for Black Knot our only defense as a community is to control what is already here and try to minimize the spread and damage. If you have any questions please feel free to call Uplands Nursery at 635-2603. We would be happy help you.