

Eldarica pine problems

I have about 12 Eldarica pines and about three or four are having branches dying out from the center to the base of the tree. Each year a few more branches die, which doesn't appear normal. There are no indications of insects or other obvious disease.

The pines are growing in a location in the mountains about 4,000 feet high. The soil is sandy to silt. Trees are watered every two weeks during the hot, dry windy summer. I planted these pines as they thrive in heat, drought, wind and poor soil.

—CALIFORNIA

Dr. Len Burkhart, Davey's resident horticulturist and technical adviser in California, said that there is some confusion over the naming of Eldarica pine, both the common and the Latin names. Trees labeled Eldarica pine (*Pinus eldarica*) in a nursery may actually be Afghan pine (*Pinus halepensis eldarica*) or even mixed up with Brutan or Calabrian pine (*Pinus brutia*). Mondel pine also occurs in the nursery trade in the West and Southwest and is probably the true Afghan pine. Due to the confusion of these species in the nursery trade, the actual identity of your trees should be questioned.

In this situation, the importance of the specific species relates to ability of the trees to withstand cold. Calabrian pine can not tolerate temperatures below 0°F, while true Afghan pine can. Trees planted in conditions to which they are not

adapted are more prone to stress and environmental conditions, which in turn can make them more susceptible to disease and pest problems as well as simple decline.

The problem could be as simple as cold injury or the trees could be stressed and subject to increased branch loss. Other possible problems for pines in your area include pine rust, pitch canker and other cankers, bark beetles and various needle diseases.

It would help if you had confirmation of the species of pine on your property but, for now, removal of the dead and dying branches is recommended. Take photographs of the trees from several angles, including the trunk (especially if you see excessive pitching, holes, etc.). You should contact your local county personnel with the photos and a branch sample (preferably dying, not completely dead) or send your sample to a diagnostic laboratory for further diagnosis.

Dogwoods declining

Some of the dogwoods in our area show various degrees of decline. The affected trees have smaller, lighter-colored leaves and they often develop fall color early and curl or shrivel in the summer. On some trees, there are slightly sunken areas at the soil line. We cut open the area and found that the bark is discolored. In some, the bark is gone and the wood is exposed. What causes this? What can be done to control?

—PENNSYLVANIA

Based on your description, the problem appears to be related to crown canker disease caused by *Phytophthora cactorum*. This disease can weaken the affected plant and cause smaller and light-colored leaves which discolor prematurely, with slight distortion. As the disease progresses the problem may be on one side first and later spread.

Study the base of the trunk at the soil line. The sunken areas may be cankers produced by the fungus. These cankers can discolor and kill the cambium. In addition, when the bark sloughs off, it exposes the underneath tissue. If these cankers extend and surround the trunks they can girdle and kill the tree.

Crown canker is found mostly on newly planted plants because of basal bark injury or other type of transplanting wounds. Wounds can also result from improper mowing or trimming. Consider providing barriers or mulching to protect the trunks.

Avoid planting dogwood plants where there was incidence of dogwood mortality. Consider treating affected dogwoods with *Phytophthora* specific fungicides such as Subdue, Aliette or Terrazol as needed. In addition, examine the plants for possible dogwood anthracnose disease. This is also a potential destructive killer disease.

Follow label specifications, and treat as needed. **LM**



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