In Bay Area, April showers brought tree disease in May

Q There has been an outpouring of questions resulting from the spring deluge: Why are my elm leaves turning black and curling up? Why are my peach and nectarine leaves all bubbly and curled? My oak leaves suddenly turned tan; can you tell me if it is dying? The new growth on my oak trees has turned a fuzzy white; what is it? There are brown patches on all my valley oak leaves; what disease do they have? All my bay trees have turned brown and died; has anybody else experienced this?

Ray Moritz
Ask an Arborist

A: How could anybody help but notice the fungi-feeding frenzy on our plants! Our very wet winter and spring have created a bumper crop of fungi.

So this fungus named Mycelia walks into a bar, sits down next to this really handsome dude and orders a drink. The total hunk turns to her and says, 'I'm in the mood for sappy romance. How about retiring to the mush room?' She gazes into his eyes and says, 'Your green eyes are intoxicating, you've got knock-dead looks, but I'm totally repulsed by you. What are you, some kind of copper?' Get it?

Well you will get it whether you like it or not. There is still an abundance of infectious spores hanging around from lastyear's soggy spring. So, Ask an Arborist has selflessly created this handy table to get you to stop bugging him. The bad news is: This second year of fungal follies is going to make a mess of your landscape. The good news is: that most of the bay trees (a.k.a. the Typhoid Marys of Sudden Oak Death) are not dead and will live to spread more spores and sooty fungus for many years to come.

In most cases you don't have to do anything and your trees will recover in a month or so.

An excellent guide for pest and disease diagnosis that describes pests and pathogens by plant spe-

▸ ARBORIST: *Page F9*

Tree ailments and treatments

Common Name	Hosts	Description	Treatment
DISEASES			
Anthracnose Chinese Elm, sycamore and oaks Stegophora ulema	Chinese elm, valley oak, black oak, coast live oak, canyon live oak, London plane tree, California sycamore.	Leaves that are rough, black, curled, smaller than normal, with shepherd's crook on elm. A sparse canopy on all. Spots or irregular dead areas on leaves or twigs, distorted foliage and partial or complete defoliation.	Thin out branches or whole plants to improve aeration and plant health. Fungicides are usually not necessary or effective. In some severe cases low- toxicity sprays may be appropriate: Bordeaux mix, copper soap fungicide, lime sulfur (winter application).
Bacterial blight and canker Pseudomonas syringae	Apricot, cherry, citrus, peach, other stone fruits, elm (wet wood), English laurel, lilac, olive, oleander.	Sap/gum oozing from bark of stone fruits. Sudden browning of blossoms, leaves and shoots.	Avoid spray irrigation. Thin branches and plants to improve aeration and light penetration. Prune out and dispose of infected tissue, followed by two applications of Bordeaux mix in early fall.
Fire blight Erwinia Amylovora	Pear, quince, apple, crab apple, cotoneaster, hawthorn, loquat and toyon.	Sudden wilting, contortion and blackening of leaves and succulent shoots.	Replace with resistant species or cultivars. Prune out infected twigs and branches by cutting well back in the healthy tissue and sterilizing tools between cuts (10 percent bleach solution). Clean up and dispose of infected tissue. Spray with very weak Bordeaux or other copper fungicide when first blossoms appear; repeat applications weekly throughout the blooming period.
Oak twig dieback Diplodia quercina, Cryptocline cinerescens, Discula quercina.	Coast live oak	New twig growth and leaves turn white or tan. With Cryptocline, new and mature leaves turn tan or bleached in the late spring or early summer. May be scattered through canopy or bleach the entire canopy in particularly wet years.	In mild cases no action is necessary. Prune out diseased and dead branches in October and early November before the rains start. Thin canopy to improve aeration and light penetration. Fungicides provide little control and usually are not needed, but a professional can apply a systemic fungicide within a few days after pruning for improved control.
Peach leaf curl Taphrina spp	Peach, nectarine.	Foliage that is reddish, contorted, blistered or bubbly. Shoots may become thickened and deformed. Early leaf drop.	Remove and destroy leaves when the trees are dry. Dormant-season application of Bordeaux mix and sulfur (use at low temperatures and never with horticultural oils) after last leaves have fallen and again just prior to leaf-out.
Powdery mildew Podosphaera leucotricha	Apple, coast live oak, canyon live oak, valley oak, sycamore, crape myrtle, rose and stone fruits.	Powdery splotches or coatings on leaves. Distorted, dwarfed masses of twigs and foliage ("witches broom").	Select resistant species and varieties. Avoid spray irrigation and frequent pruning. Improve air circulation with thinning. If you can't ignore it, spray with 2 teaspoons of baking soda and fine horticultural oil in 1 gallon of water, copper soap fungicide, Neem oil or sulfur (never with oils).
Rusts	Willow, rose, birch, poplars, hawthorn, pine, pear, cedar, cypress, juniper and rhododendron.	Yellow, orange or reddish spore pustules on leaves. Leaves turn yellow or brown and may drop prematurely. Branch dieback.	Avoid spray irrigation. Prune out severely infected twigs. Clean up infected leaves and twigs. Frequent spring applications of fungicide: Bordeaux mix, sulfur (use at low temperatures and never with horticultural oils). Synthetic fungicides: Triadimefon, Triforine.
Sudden Oak Death Phytophthora ramorum	Coast live oak, black oak, tan oak, canyon live oak, huckleberry rhododendron and many other species.	Staining, dark reddish to almost black ooze bleeding from bark; canopy thinning and browning; cracking and loosening of bark. Secondary pests such as Hypoxylon canker (black knobs on bark) and beetles may be present. Diagnosis requires a professional.	Treat live oaks with Agri-Fos bark spray for prophylactic resistance or early disease for control. If the tree has severe foliar disease caused by another pathogen, do not treat until it is re-foliated. Do not treat for ambrosia and oak bark beetles unless the trees are already weakened by SOD or other disease.
PESTS OF THE MONTH			
Oak worms Pityganidia californica	Coast live oak, other evergreen and deciduous oaks.	Small gray moths fluttering around oaks, worms hanging from silken threads or on branches and leaves, granular frass (poop) on cars, decks and pavement. Chewed leaves and defoliation.	BT (Bacillus thuringiensis) and insecticidal soaps. For bad outbreaks: pyrethrum and spinosad. You must thoroughly spray the tops and undersides of leaves — best left to a professional applicator.
Snails/Slugs	Just about everything	Place boards, sheets of plastic or metal, about 1 inch above the ground under trees, shrubs and herbs. Then just pluck and discard the pests at night or early morning.	▸ Coffee (0.1 to 0.05 percent caffeine): repels slugs but doesn't kill them. Caffeine buildup eventually becomes toxic to plants so be careful about using brewed coffee as a soil dressing. ▸ Beer: Use a flat container buried with lip even with soil surface. ▸ Copper bands or copper spray (Bordeaux mix) on tree shrub and vine trunks
Thrips Frankliniella spp. Heliothrips haemorrhoidalis	Herbaceous plants, avocado, azalea, rhododendron, rose, English laurel, pear, photinia, toyon and other broadleaf evergreens	Bleached foliage, stippling, contorted leaves, stunted growth, dead spots or blotches on flowers.	Mild to moderate infestations may be sprayed off with a frequent, strong hose stream directed to the undersides of leaves. Thorough spraying of leaf undersides with horticultural oils, insecticidal soaps, pyrethrums or Merit (imidacloprid). Keep plants healthy and vigorous. Avoid shearing terminals by prunes