



The Highs and Lows of 2005

Enquiries received by the Arboricultural Advisory and Information Service (AAIS) during 2005 provide a valuable snapshot of the most frequent tree health problems encountered by the arboricultural fraternity. The information provided in this Tree Damage Alert relates only to those enquiries where samples were sent to AAIS for examination and diagnosis. These arose from local authority officers, arboricultural consultants and tree surgeons and many interested amateurs. Enquiries received over the Tree Helpline are not included, but these broadly follow the same pattern and many of the Tree Helpline calls result in samples being sent to AAIS for diagnosis.

Not unexpectedly the top problem was Honey fungus (*Armillaria*) (TDA 105); 16% of all enquiries on 21 host species. However, Honey fungus hides a multitude of sins. As an enquiry it could be related to the death of a tree or shrub, or identification of toadstools, decay, root-rot or merely fungal mycelium - the latter resulting from secondary invasion.

Bleeding canker of Horse chestnut was second to Honey fungus in frequency, with many more enquiries received over the Tree Helpline but not resulting in examination of specimens. Bleeding canker on Horse chestnut is very common and widespread and is undoubtedly now a major problem in the arboricultural field. Pathologists in the Tree Health Division of Forest Research now consider that the problem is caused by a bacterium rather than a *Phytophthora* species as had previously been the case (see www.forestresearch.gov.uk/bleedingcanker)

Around a third of the enquirers requested the identification of fungal fruit bodies. Twenty eight different species were identified, excluding *Armillaria*, with the following five species the most frequent, *Ganoderma adspersum* / *G.applanatum*, *Meripilus giganteus*, *G.resinaceum*, *Laetiporus sulphureus* and *Phaeolus schweinitzii*.

Six percent of the cases involved a variety of leaf diseases with Willow Scab (TDA 86), Box Blight (TDA 84), Holly Blight (TDA 73) and Blossom Wilt (TDAs 99/101) being the most common.

Insect problems were infrequently reported. Only the Cypress aphid (*Cinara cupressi*) caused major concern with all cases occurring in hedges of Leyland cypress. Frequently clipped hedges made up of golden foliaged varieties appear to be most seriously affected.

Some cases of wilt diseases, including *Verticillium* and Dutch elm disease, were reported. Dutch elm disease was observed to be very common and widespread in hedgerows in the countryside, but very few enquiries were received. Several cases of *Phytophthora* Root Rot were received with most being related to dieback of Yew trees.

The main abiotic (non-living) enquiries related to actual or suspected herbicide damage, usually concerning street trees.

As always with any diagnostic service there were a few unsolved enquiries!

Enquiries received by e-mail are frequently frustrating because of lack of supporting information (see the Diagnostic Form at www.treehelp.info) and inclusion of poor quality photographs. However, they do serve as a first contact allowing more information and specimens to be requested. Nevertheless, the year's enquiries provide a valuable window onto the current threats to the tree population. We hope the 2006 enquiries will prove as varied and valuable

Brian Greig, Tree Pathologist, AAIS, Farnham, GU10 4LH