

BEECH BARK DISEASE

D. Lonsdale and D. Wainhouse. Forestry Commission Bulletin 69. HMSO, London 1987. pp. 15, price £2.30 (by post).

This bulletin describes a disease which, like Dutch elm disease, involves an attack by both an insect and a fungus. On trees suffering from beech bark disease, patches of bark are killed by the fungus, *Nectria coccinea* (Pers) Fr. following heavy attacks by a small sucking insect, *Cryptococcus fagisuga* Lind. Although the disease does not occur in Ireland it is considered the most serious disease affecting beech in Britain. In their treatment of the subject the authors consider the disease by describing its symptoms/development, the ecology of both the insect and the fungus, biological and environmental influences on disease outbreaks and control measures.

As well as *Fagus sylvatica* L., the disease also affects American beech, *F. grandifolia* Ehrh. and is yet another example of a pathogen being introduced accidentally from one continent to another: spreading, in this case, from the east coast of Canada south-westwards to attack native north American stands of beech.

Using the excellent colour and black and white photographs the authors describe how the disease appears firstly on the bark as white specks. These may increase over time to cover much of the main stem. It is generally not until the *Nectria* fungus invades, however, that the bark tissue is actually killed. Where such lesions coalesce, girdling of the stem may occur resulting in tree mortality. Although the disease can kill trees, the authors suggest that the prospects for diseased stands in Britain seem quite good, with proper silvicultural regimes seen as the best option for future management of such stands.

Although beech bark disease is a relatively complex one, involving as it does an insect – fungal interaction, the authors know their subject and present it very well. Having most of the plates together on the centre pages is, however, a little distracting and they would perhaps benefit from being distributed more throughout the text. In summary therefore, this is yet another well written and professionally illustrated publication from the Forestry Commission and, although not for all practising forest managers, is a useful reference.

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