A close-up photograph of tree bark, showing a rough, textured surface with vertical ridges and grooves. Patches of green moss and light-colored lichen are scattered across the bark. The text is overlaid in a bold, white, sans-serif font.

ASH DIEBACK
DISEASE
IN GREATER
MANCHESTER

OUR TREES AND WOODLANDS ARE FACING THREATS FROM MANY NEW PESTS AND DISEASES - ASH DIEBACK DISEASE IS ONE OF THESE.

This leaflet has been produced to help inform those who work with, or have an interest in, our trees and woodlands in Greater Manchester. It contains practical advice on managing our tree populations, helping to safeguard their long term future and the many benefits they bring to our towns and cities.

Ash dieback disease is a fungal infection which is having a serious impact on ash trees across Britain. The disease is also known as *Chalara* dieback and by its scientific name *Hymenoscyphus fraxinea*. More detailed advice can be found on the Forestry Commission website www.forestry.gov.uk/chalara and within a [Forestry Commission publication](#) for North West England.

The infection is now widespread across England and Wales with many outbreaks in Scotland (an up to date infection map is available on the [Forestry Commission website](#)).

GREATER MANCHESTER'S ASH POPULATION

Our current best estimate is that there are approximately 1 million ash trees across Greater Manchester. As well as in woodland plantings, ash can be widely found as a street and park tree. It freely regenerates and clumps of young trees are frequently seen on roadside verges and within woods. Most of the woodland plantings over the last 15 years contain some element of ash.



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ASH DIEBACK ACROSS GREATER MANCHESTER

A more localised outbreak in Lancashire/ Greater Manchester was first reported by the Forestry Commission (via their online maps) in October 2014. These showed records in Bolton, Bury and Rochdale districts where the disease had been identified. At this time, the disease symptoms were quite subtle and not easily spotted. Currently (2018) there are only a few grid squares in Greater Manchester where the disease has not yet been recorded.

SYMPTOMS

Ash dieback is spread by spores dispersed from small fruiting bodies which develop on the stalks of infected leaf litter during late spring and throughout summer of the year after leaf fall.

Initial infection in the leaves spreads into stems and can cause lesions on branches and stems leading to wilting of foliage, eventually resulting in dead branches and crown dieback. Often secondary infections such as *Armillaria* spp (Honey fungus) where present can kill severely weakened trees. More information and photographs can be found within the **Forestry Commission symptoms guide**.

Ash dieback is particularly destructive of common ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) including the 'Pendula' or weeping variety. Other species of ash are also susceptible to some degree.



Dieback disease infected ash leaves

© Forestry Commission

REPORTING SIGNS OF PESTS AND DISEASES

Suspected cases of ash dieback (and other pests/diseases) can be reported using the Tree Alert reporting tool at

www.forestry.gov.uk/trealert



Fruiting bodies on the stalk of an infected ash leaf

© Barnaby Wylder - Forestry Commission

METHOD OF SPREAD

Spores are spread by wind locally, and possibly up to tens of miles. Over longer distances, the risk of disease spread is most likely to be movement of diseased plants. The movement of leaves and leaf material may also result in the disease being spread if they are not burnt or composted. Movement of logs or unsawn wood from infected trees might also be a pathway for the disease, although this is considered to be a low risk if clean of twigs, leaves and litter.



MANAGEMENT OF ASH

KEY POINTS:

- Do not rush to fell trees if ash dieback is present. Infected individuals may recover over subsequent years – be patient, if health and safety considerations allow
- Try to retain some ash in woodlands to help aid identification of potential resistant individuals and maintain biodiversity values
- Trees most at risk are those in woodlands, young trees and coppice regrowth. Trees in the urban environment may be less at risk as leaf sweeping is more common and soil-borne infections (such as *Armillaria* spp) are less prevalent in the built environment.
- A susceptible mature tree will not immediately become unsafe and may take many years to dieback. For large or valuable specimens, owners should seek advice from a professional arborist.



- Work on ash trees with TPOs or within Conservation Areas will still require consideration by the local authority as before. Similarly, Forestry Commission felling licence regulations will still need to be adhered to if applicable.
- Removal of infected ash leaf litter in the autumn may reduce local spread but is labour-intensive and impractical in most woodland situations.
- Dead stems do provide biodiversity benefits – try to retain deadwood (particularly in woodlands) if health and safety considerations allow



MANAGEMENT OF ASH

KEY POINTS CONTINUED:

- Do not replant or move any ash trees
- Consider planting alternative species after any felling – many of our woods would benefit from diversifying their woody species in any case. Specifying British grown stock helps to avoid the risk of importing pest and diseases from abroad. Guidance on species selection can be found on the Forestry Commission's Ecological Site Classification website – part of their **Decision Support Services** (login required) and Natural England's research '**Assessing and addressing the impacts of ash dieback on UK woodlands**'.
- Thin woodlands as usual – favour the retention of species other than ash (if infected)
- Continue with biosecurity measures that will also restrict movement of other diseases particularly soil-borne infections such as *Phytophthora spp.* Guidance is available at www.forestry.gov.uk/biosecurity.

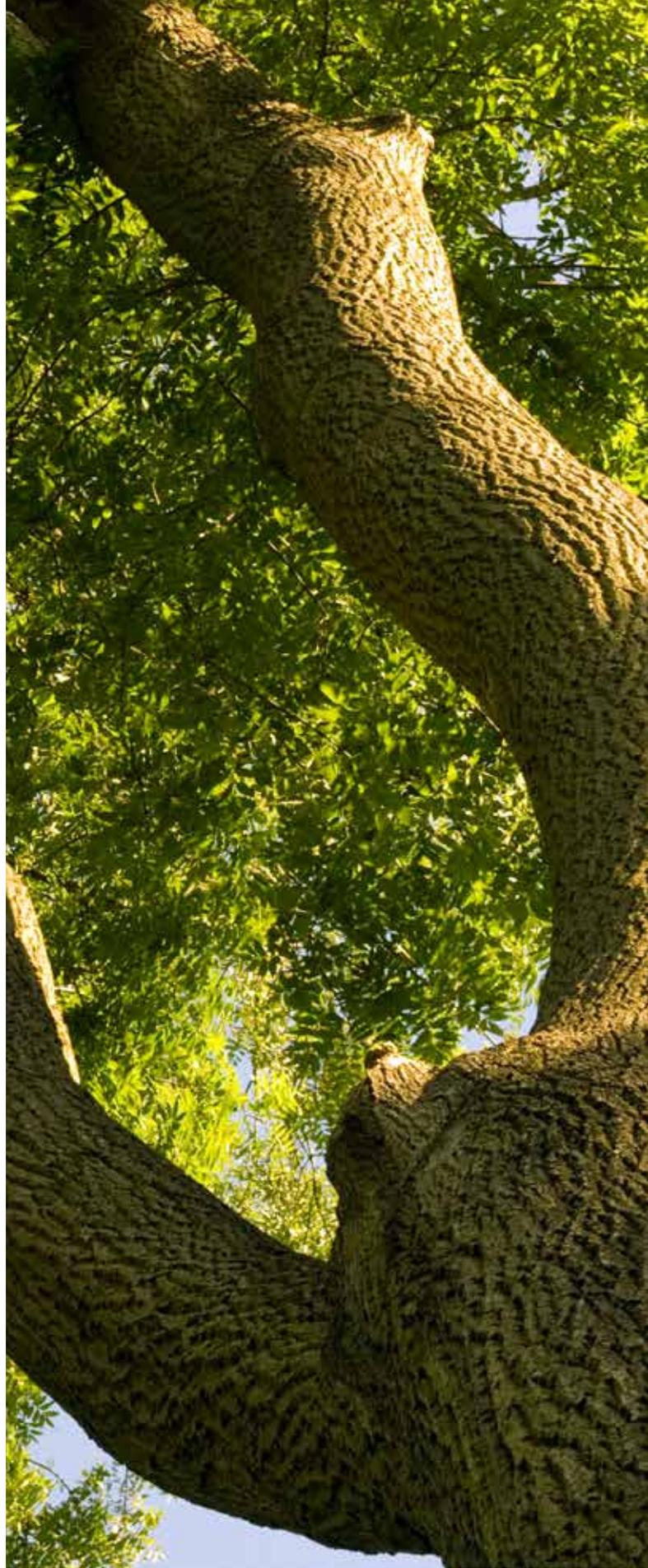


ASH TREE ARISING

- Where possible, fell ash trees after leaf fall (to reduce the opportunity for movement of leaf material)
- Reduce opportunities for leafy material to be transported between sites
- Ash logs can be moved between sites unless a Statutory Plant Health Notice has been served

ASH TREES IN GREATER MANCHESTER — WHAT FUTURE?

- Ash dieback disease is in Greater Manchester and may be more widely spread than its present known extent. Its arrival here was sooner than previously predicted and it is likely that the disease will spread throughout Greater Manchester and generally become more frequent and severe in its expression
- In spite of the disease, ash trees will certainly remain in our landscape in the short term, and in the long term are still likely to be present, even if in reduced numbers. We may have to accept that our remaining ash trees will look less healthy in the future
- There will be more work (and cost) involved in managing and monitoring our ash tree population in the future
- The national advice is continuously under review and guidance may change as knowledge and understanding of the disease and its impacts increases



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