

# Ash Dieback

# The facts



*Extracted with kind permission of The Tree Council 'Ash Dieback Disease: a guide for tree owners', June 2020 [download from [www.treecouncil.org.uk](http://www.treecouncil.org.uk)]*

**A**sh dieback is a highly destructive fungal disease affecting ash trees. It causes leaf loss and canopy decline and, in some cases, causes the trees to die. It is estimated that the majority will become affected with ash dieback. A small proportion of ash trees may have what is called 'genetic tolerance' to ash dieback, meaning they will survive and reproduce to create the next generation of trees. Therefore, tree owners have an important part to play in protecting tolerant and resistant trees wherever possible and safe to do so.

Research has found that seven or eight out of every 10

ash trees may die, but some trees do show some levels of tolerance and may even recover over time.

Isolated ash trees may be less affected by ash dieback than those in woodlands.

However, the disease presents an opportunity to develop 'treescapes' that are more resilient to pests, diseases and other threats, by replacing ash trees with other species.

Ash dieback causes a range of symptoms including wilted and spotted leaves. Most affected ash trees will lose some of the leaves at the top of the tree, known as its crown. However, ash dieback can affect trees in different ways. For example, some may develop dark patches called 'basal lesions' at the base of their trunk but



*Ash trees in a woodland declining due to ash dieback*

have no sign of ash dieback in their leaves and branches. This is why it is important to consult a tree professional if you are unsure. If an ash tree looks unhealthy, it does not automatically mean it has ash dieback.

There is no known cure to this tree disease.

By retaining trees with no or limited signs of ash dieback, owners might allow precious ash dieback-tolerant trees to live and reproduce.

There is no evidence that the fungus can affect or infect humans or animals.



*Easily identified by black buds in winter*



*Change in one tree over one season*



*Typical shape*

## Signs of possible ash dieback



*Ash leaves*



Spots on leaves



*Ash seeds*

# Classes of ash dieback



Wilted leaves



**Class 1 100%-76% of crown remains**



Branches losing their leaves and 'dying back'



**Class 2 75%-51%**



**Class 3 50%-26%**



Dark patches called lesions on branches/trunk



**Class 4 25%-0%**

If it starts to look like a class 3 or 4 tree, it is usually best to consult a qualified tree professional. If the tree is assessed as presenting an unacceptable risk to people or property, felling may be recommended. Otherwise pruning work might manage the safety risk.

If you have any concerns about the health of your ash trees, you should consult a tree professional such as your local council's tree officer.

Where ash trees pose a low safety risk, for example trees in hedges between two fields with no public access, they should be left to decline naturally so they can continue to contribute benefits to the environment.

To inspect your trees, you should walk around your garden once a year in late summer/autumn and ask:

- Roughly what percentage of the crown has died?
- What risk does the tree pose to humans, animals or property?
- Can you mitigate the risk?
- Is the tree old, with a special history?
- Is the tree showing signs of tolerance to the disease?

#### Options:

- Retain with no work
- Deadwood removal
- Pollarding/topping
- Coppicing
- Felling

Only trained and experienced tree surgeons should do work on ash trees affected by ash dieback. Be aware that rogue trader tree contractors operate in some areas.

Unless trees need urgent safety work, plan tree work outside of the bird nesting season (February – August).

Healthy looking ash trees should not be felled in anticipation of the disease.

Where safe to do so, please consider keeping your ash trees. Whatever we can do to retain trees increases the chance that the next generation of ash trees will be able to grow and thrive.

Currently there is no central or local government financial support for private individuals managing their trees with ash dieback.

There is no one tree that can replace ash. However, aspen, alder, field maple, sycamore, birch, rowan, oak and disease resistant elm are all good choices.

## Other tree species

### For soil quality

Alder and lime leaves have similar qualities, as do to a smaller extent sycamore, field maple and aspen.

### For birds and mammals

Oak and beech, sycamore, birch and hazel.

### For insects, mosses and lichens

Disease resistant elm is the best substitute, followed by sycamore, aspen, oak and hazel.

New ash trees can be allowed to grow from seed (natural regeneration), but it is likely that most of these young trees may die from ash dieback themselves.

Of course, any that survive may be the future of our ash population and should be nurtured carefully. There are currently no guaranteed disease-resistant strains of ash available on the market.

We suggest using the Devon 3/2/1 formula: plant at least 3 new trees for loss of a large tree, 2 for a medium tree and 1 tree for a small tree .



For information on tree issues, see TDC's website at:



<https://www.tandridge.gov.uk/Planning-and-building/Conservation-and-trees/Trees>.

Published by Warlingham Parish Council  
<https://warlingham-pc.gov.uk>

