

Less-than-perky Pines: Diplodia

If the new spring growth on your conifers is droopy or if it is stunted and brown, you have reason to suspect the presence of Diplodia (*Sphaeropsis sapinea*): a common, difficult to control and potentially fatal fungus. The disease is frequently found on Austrian and Scots pines planted in groupings, as well as any stressed, young trees nearby. Drought, root restriction, or challenging planting sites also heighten the risk.

In spring, Diplodia infects emerging needles and developing cone scales, which later fall to the ground (where the fungus remains until spring rains release the spores the following year). The bare patches caused by this premature needle drop are not only unsightly, they also diminish the tree's ability to produce food. Catching a Diplodia infection early is the first step toward effective control. Treatment involves antifungal applications and proper cultural practices (watering, mulching, and fertilizing). Sanitation – removing fallen needles and pinecones – is also essential to managing this disease.



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