

Dothistroma Needle Blight

A Fungal Disease Kills Needles of Pine Trees

Dothistroma is a fungus that infects the needles of Austrian, Ponderosa, Red, Mugho, and Scotch pines. Reddish-brown spots and bands form in the infected needles, giving the disease its alternate name of red-banded needle blight.

What to Look For

- Reddish-brown spots and bands form in the needles.
- Infected needles drop from the tree.
- Symptoms are most prominent in the lower six feet of the tree.

Life Cycle

- Fungus overwinters in infected needles.
- Infection of new needles takes place spring through autumn through spores moved by splashing of rain drops.
- The time period between infection and appearance of symptoms varies from 5 weeks to 6 months.

Treatment and Prevention

- Promote air flow by reducing density of plants around pine trees.
- Modify irrigation system to avoid wetting needles; prolonged needle wetness favors fungal infection.
- Mulch the tree or treat it with Root Enhancement System.
- Provide low level nitrogen fertilization.
- Your consulting arborist may recommend fungicide sprays to control Dothistroma. Sprays will not cure the disease, but can increase the tree's longevity in the landscape.



Symptoms on Mugo Pine.



Needle drop concentrates in lower, interior portions of the tree.

Photos Sourced from UMN Extension