

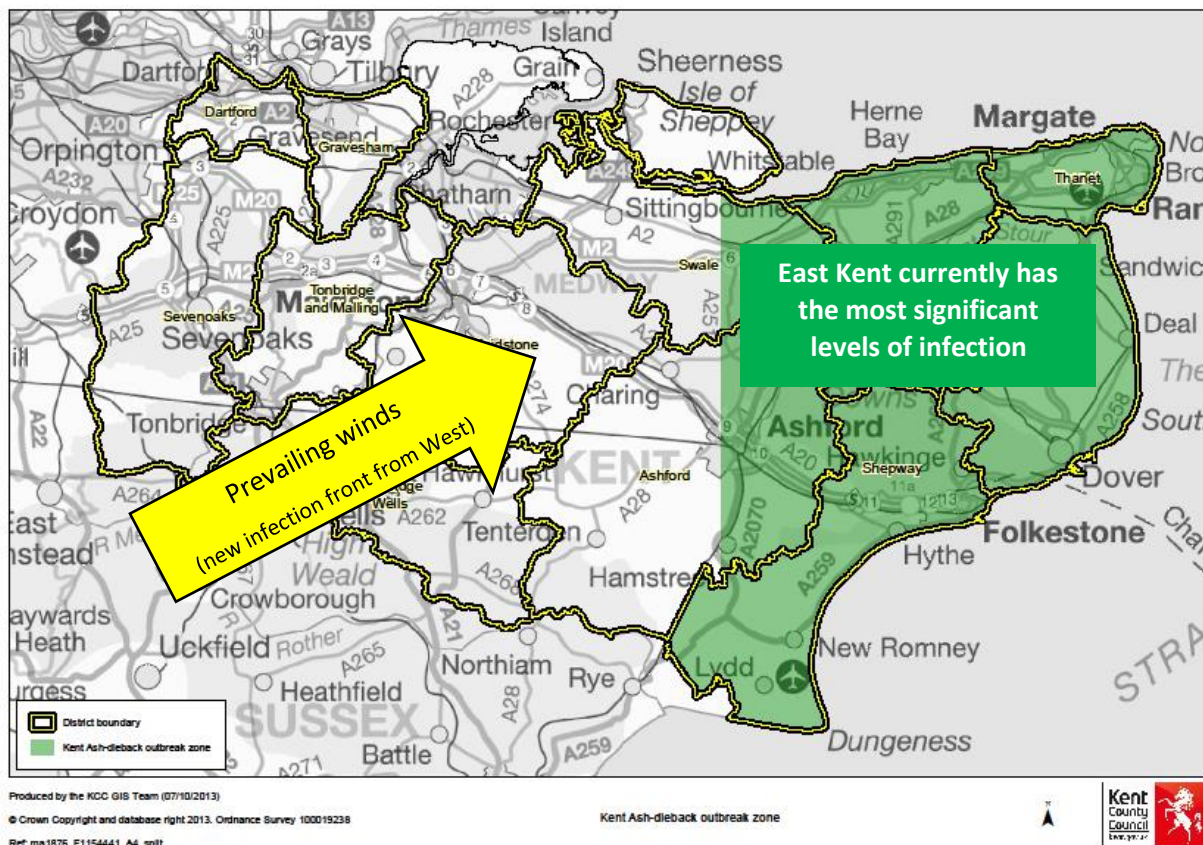
Ash Dieback / *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*

Ash Dieback in Kent - Advice to Schools

What is Ash Dieback?

Ash Dieback is a serious disease of the native European Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) caused by the fungus *Hymenoscyphus fraxineus*. The pathogen causes leaf loss and crown Dieback, weakening the trees and usually leading to premature tree death through secondary infection and / or environmental stress.

The most severely affected is the European Ash, though some exotic Ash species are also vulnerable to attack. Young trees are particularly vulnerable and succumb rapidly to infection.



Map of Kent identifying East Kent Ash Dieback outbreak zone and new infection front from the West

Why is this important?

Ash Dieback was first recorded in East Kent in 2012 and since this time has spread across the entire County. East Kent remains the hardest hit part of the County, however a recent infection front has impacted West Kent as a result of spores being carried by prevailing

south-westerly winds. Ash is Kent's most widespread tree, a conspicuous feature of our County's landscape, our public spaces, and a common sight along our roadsides.

The potential loss of so many Ash trees will badly affect our biodiversity, but as well as this, the progress of the infection means that there could well be safety concerns with a danger to passers-by from falling branches etc.

What is KCC doing?

The best scientific advice that we have tells us that there is no way of combating this disease for now. All that we can do then is to try to slow its spread and make sure that diseased trees do not become a safety hazard. Kent County Council is working with a range of partners in the public and private sector to monitor the progress of this disease and ensure that any safety work is carried out.

We have collated an inventory of Ash trees at KCC maintained schools. This will be part of a continuing tree inspection programme, to ensure an up-to-date record of where Ash trees are located.

We will carry out an annual tree inspection programme in KCC maintained schools to pick up any safety and maintenance works. This will meet our duty of care not only to schools but also to your neighbours.

We will meet the cost of the inspection process and schools will be responsible for any resultant works identified.

What can you, as a school, do to help?

Whilst we cannot halt the disease, there are steps that we can take to limit its spread by:

- Identifying any cases of Ash Dieback on your school site. There are a range of symptoms, which can help identify an infected tree:
 - a) Dead or dying tops of trees and abnormal clusters of twigs resulting from epicormic¹ re-growth;
 - b) Wilting leaves visible in summer;
 - c) Lesions or wounds on the branches / stalks;
 - d) Dieback of leaves which become dry and blackened;
 - e) Small white fruiting bodies growing on stalks of fallen Ash leaves; and
 - f) Staining of wood under bark.

For a detailed view of the symptoms, please visit the Forestry Commission website: *Link to Forestry Commission Ash Die Back guidance*²

¹ Epicormic buds lie dormant beneath the bark, their growth suppressed by hormones from active shoots higher up the plant. Under certain conditions, they develop into active shoots, such as when damage occurs to higher parts of the plant.

² [http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/Symptoms_guide_Chalara_dieback_of_ash_2012.pdf/\\$file/Symptoms_guide_Chalara_dieback_of_ash_2012.pdf](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/pdf/Symptoms_guide_Chalara_dieback_of_ash_2012.pdf/$file/Symptoms_guide_Chalara_dieback_of_ash_2012.pdf)

- Helping to prevent the spread of the disease by practising sensible bio-security precautions.
- Raising awareness amongst your students.

What to do if you identify Ash Dieback?

You are not currently obliged to take any particular action if you discover infected trees on your school site, unless the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) serve you with a statutory Plant Health Notice requiring specified action.

You should, however, keep an eye on the trees' safety as the disease progresses and liaise with KCC on potential safety interventions that may be required.

If you do identify the disease, please report it immediately. You can do this in two ways:

- To KCC Emergency Planning at: emergency.planning@kent.gov.uk ; or
- via the 'Tree Alert' reporting tool on the Forestry Commission website: [Forestry Commission tree alert](https://www.forestry.gov.uk/treelalert).³ It would be helpful if you can take pictures of the tree and the symptoms of the disease, as this will help the Commission better assess the condition of the tree.



Help prevent the spread of Ash Dieback

Legislation prohibits all movement of Ash plants, trees and seeds within Great Britain until further notice. As well as this, DEFRA has imposed a Plant Health Order to introduce emergency measures to prevent the introduction and spread of the disease.

Infection starts primarily on leaves and is progressive over time, with dieback and stem lesions usually forming in the next growing season. Fungal spores are produced on infected fallen leaves and shoots in the growing season after infection. Natural spread is by wind-blown spores from these fruiting bodies. However, spread of the disease will be speeded up when fallen and pruned leaves, twigs and branches are moved from one site to another. Therefore, where practical, avoid moving fallen leaves and branches off your

³ <http://www.forestry.gov.uk/treelalert>

site and seek to hasten natural decomposition through utilising on-site composting and creation of “habitat piles”.

Although Ash cannot recover from infection, some larger trees may survive for a long time and some may even display a genetic resistance to the pathogen, so please do not do any cutting without seeking professional advice. We do not recommend the pre-emptive felling of healthy Ash trees.

New planting

If you are thinking of new landscaping schemes using Ash species, you should discuss with your contractor/consultant substituting alternative native trees such as a Small-leaved Lime and Field Maple. As a general rule and where practical, regeneration of woodland through natural succession should be prioritised over new planting.

Recent Planting

If Ash trees have been recently been planted as part of a new landscaping scheme, the plants will need to be assessed carefully before the end of the defects period.

NB: You can most easily spot the symptoms of this disease in the spring and summer, which may not correspond to your end of defects inspection date.



If you employ grounds contractors to maintain your trees, please make them aware of this guidance and the restrictions on movement of Ash, including its foliage and trimmings.

In addition, when visiting any woodland areas, perhaps as part of a school trip, it is very important that any leaves or mud are removed from footwear, cars, bikes etc. before leaving the site. Public information signs are available which you may want to display around your school site.

If you require any of these signs (which are free of charge) please contact **Tony Harwood, Resilience and Emergency Planning Manager** and **Louise Butfoy, Project Officer, Kent County Council** via email: emergency.planning@kent.gov.uk informing him of the number of signs that you require.

Please raise awareness amongst your students about these issues. Tell them how they can identify Ash trees and the symptoms of the infection so that they can also help monitor the spread of Ash Dieback. You may want to highlight the issue in the classroom. It could provide a very real and relevant opportunity to talk about biodiversity and plant health. In addition, your students could help in identifying any cases of Ash Dieback that you may have on your site.

Even if you do not have any Ash trees on site you can still talk to your students about being vigilant when visiting wooded areas, ensuring all footwear, cars, bikes, prams etc are cleaned before leaving the area.

Useful Resources and websites

The Woodland Trust provides a range of free, high quality resources to inspire schools and children about woods and trees:

“Two thirds of UK schools are currently working with us and we’d love your school to get involved and try new projects with us.

- *Apply for a free tree pack to be delivered to your school. They come in three different sizes - small (30 saplings), medium (105 saplings) and large (420 saplings) sizes and schools are guaranteed a small pack on application. Schools are eligible to apply for up to 2 free tree packs per year, so you can keep applying to receive a pack each March and November until your project is complete. They’re ideal for gardening clubs and to make your school more environmentally friendly. Your first tree pack request can also earn you 2 points towards the Green Tree Schools Award. You can apply online at www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/hedge and if you have any queries you can contact us at learning@woodlandtrust.org.uk*
- *We have plenty of resources online, including a [PowerPoint for an assembly](#) at www.naturedetectives.org.uk/schools*
- *There are lots of pests and diseases to be aware of, public sightings are vital. You can get involved in a tree health survey here: <http://www.opalexplornature.org/TreeSurvey>*
- *If you are buying trees for your school, try and ensure only UK sourced and grown native trees are used - ask your contractors for proof if possible.”*

Additional resources

Forestry Commission: www.forestry.gov.uk/chalara

Department for Environment,
Food & Rural Affairs (Defra): www.defra.gov.uk

Kent County Council: www.kent.gov.uk

Defra: Interim Control Plan:
[https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/chalara
management-plan](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/chalara-management-plan)



November 2019