Cytospora Canker

The Fungus

Cytospora Canker (Leucostoma kunzei) is a fungal infection that can affect all species of spruce in Minnesota, Colorado blue spruce (Picea pungens) being especially susceptible. Although the fungus does not typically kill the infected tree, it can significantly reduce its aesthetic value in the landscape.

Signs & Symptoms

- Needles turn brown to purple and fall off, beginning at branch tips.
- Cankers form on branches near the trunk, exuding a thick layer of resin.
- Wood beneath infected area is dark in contrast to healthy wood around the canker.
- Thread-like yellow spore tendrils may be present on infected branches.

Positive Identification

Cankers are often found on mature trees. Dying or dead infected branches show needle discoloration, and cankers can be seen near the trunk covered in a layer of resin.

Implications for Minnesota

Cytospora seldom kills spruce trees; however, physical the appearance of the tree will sustain significant damage and deformities with prolonged infection. Trees with severe damage are often removed.

Management & Control Considerations

- Annually monitor spruce for symptoms.
- Remove and dispose of affected limbs in dry weather to reduce spread of the canker.
- Plant more Cytospora resistant spruces such as Norway or white spruce.
- Chemical control is not recommended for treating Cytospora canker.

Sources

1) https://extension.umn.edu/plant-diseases/cytospora-canker