



Extension

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

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# Golden Canker (Cryptodiaporthe Canker)

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**What is golden canker?** Golden canker (officially known as Cryptodiaporthe canker) is a visually distinct and increasingly common disease of alternate-leaved dogwoods such as pagoda dogwood. This disease can potentially be lethal if infections occur on the main trunk of a tree.



**A yellow branch with orange spots typical of golden canker on pagoda dogwood.**

**What does golden canker look like?** Initial symptoms of golden canker include wilting and death of leaves on infected branches, followed by branch dieback. Infected branch tissue turns a bright, golden-yellow color. Often, orange spots will be visible scattered over this yellow tissue. These spots are fruiting bodies (reproductive structures) of the fungus that causes the disease. If unchecked, golden canker can spread from infected branches to the main trunk, resulting in the death of the tree above the point of trunk infection.

### Where does golden canker come from?

Golden canker is caused by the fungus *Cryptodiaporthe corni*, which survives in infected branches. The exact means by which this fungus is spread is not known.

### How do I save a tree with golden canker?

The only effective way of managing golden canker, once infections have occurred, is by removing diseased branches. Prune four to six inches below the golden-yellow tissue on each infected branch. To prevent accidental spread of the golden canker fungus from branch to branch, and from tree to tree, be sure to decontaminate pruning tools between each cut by treating them for at least 30 seconds with a 10% bleach solution or (preferably due to its less corrosive properties) 70% alcohol (e.g., rubbing

alcohol, certain spray disinfectants). Dispose of infected branches by burning (where allowed by local ordinance) or burying them. There are no fungicide treatments for this disease.

**How do I avoid problems with golden canker in the future?** Reduce tree stress as much as possible. When planting a new pagoda dogwood, place it in a cool, shaded site. Remove turf from around the base of the tree out to at least the drip line of the tree (i.e., the edge of where the branches extend), and apply shredded hardwood, pine or cedar mulch in this area to help keep the tree's root system cool and moist. On heavy clay soils, use one to two inches of mulch. On other soils, use three to four inches of mulch. Be sure to keep mulch four inches from the main trunk of the tree. Also, make sure the tree receives sufficient water (approximately two inches per week for newly transplanted trees; approximately one inch per week for established trees). If rainfall is insufficient, use a drip hose or soaker hose to apply supplemental water at the drip line of the tree. Fertilize trees as needed, but be sure to base any fertilization on a soil nutrient test.

**For more information on golden canker:** Contact the University of Wisconsin Plant Disease Diagnostics Clinic (PDDC) at (608) 262-2863 or [pddc@wisc.edu](mailto:pddc@wisc.edu).

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A complete inventory of UW Plant Disease Facts is available at the University of Wisconsin-Madison Plant Disease Diagnostics Clinic website: <https://pddc.wisc.edu>.

Submit additional lawn, landscape, and gardening questions at <https://hort.extension.wisc.edu/ask-a-gardening-question/>.