

Beech Leaf Disease in Rhode Island

Beech Leaf Disease (BLD) was found in southwestern Rhode Island in June 2020. First identified on American beech (*Fagus grandifolia*) in Ohio in 2012, it has since been found in Pennsylvania, New York, Connecticut, and Ontario, Canada. The disease affects the leaves and, after several years, can be severe enough to cause tree decline and mortality.

The disease was recently confirmed as being caused by a nematode, *Litylenchus crenatae mccannii*. Currently, there is no defined treatment as nematodes are difficult to control in the forest environment. However, some arboricultural firms may develop treatments suitable for landscape trees.

BLD mainly affects American beech, however it has been found on European (*Fagus sylvatica*) and Oriental beech (*Fagus orientalis*).

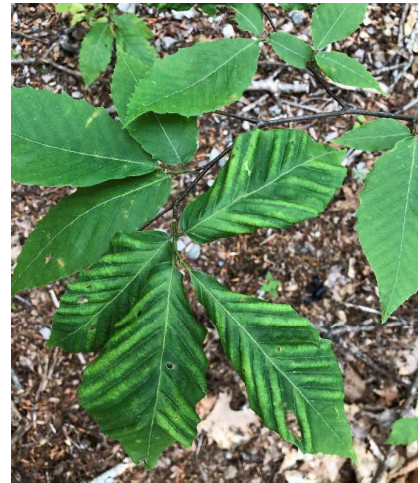
Symptoms

Early BLD symptoms are dark striping on the leaves, parallel to the leaf veins, best seen by looking upward into the backlit canopy. The striping is caused by thickening of the leaf. Lighter, chlorotic striping may also occur. Both fully mature and very young “emerging” leaves show symptoms. Eventually the affected foliage withers, dries, and yellows. Drastic leaf loss occurs for heavily symptomatic leaves during the growing season, as early as June, but asymptomatic and mildly symptomatic leaves show no or minimal leaf loss. Bud and leaf production are also affected.

Most mortality occurs in saplings within 2-5 years. Where established, BLD mortality of sapling-sized trees can reach more than 90%.

Photos by Fern Graves, RI DFE

Text from Fact Sheet: <http://www.dem.ri.gov/programs/bnatres/forest/pdf/disease-beech-leaf.pdf>



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