

# Bacterial Blight of Lilac

Scientific Name of Pathogen: *Pseudomonas syringae* pv. *syringae* (bacterium)

**Hosts:** All lilac shrubs and trees

**Damage/symptoms:** In spring, small, water-soaked lesions appear on the leaves. Lesions may expand and coalesce into larger brown areas. Affected young shoots are quickly girdled, show wilting and blackening of stems, leaves, and/or flower clusters. Dark streaks may be visible on affected shoots.



Figure 2: Dark brown leaf spots with light green margins and dieback of branches due to bacterial blight infection. Photo by William Jacobi, Colorado State University, Bugwood.org.

**Management:** Focus on supporting plant vigor by providing adequate amounts of water and nutrients during the growing season. Prune out and discard infected branches and leaves. Make the pruning cut 10 to 12 inches below the visible symptoms of disease and sterilize tools between cuts with 70% ethyl alcohol or a standard household disinfectant spray. Avoid hitting the foliage during sprinkler irrigation to minimize possible spread of the bacteria. Consider healthy pruning to increase air flow and light penetration. Chemical control is not recommended in the urban setting.



Figure 1: Shoot dieback following bacterial infection. Photo by William Jacobi, Colorado State University, Bugwood.org

**Disease cycle:** The bacterium can overwinter in infected twigs and cankers on the plant, in dead plant debris, on neighboring plants, or in the soil surrounding the plant. In the spring, the bacterium can then be spread to susceptible plants by splashing water, insect vectors, or pruning tools. *Pseudomonas* spp. infects through open wounds in the plant.



Figure 3: Multiple young shoots affected by bacterial blight. Photo by William Jacobi, Colorado State University, Bugwood.org

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