Be on the Lookout for Beech Leaf Disease!

Beech Leaf Disease (BLD) is a relatively new disease that has arrived in Bucks County and poses a significant threat to our beech trees. BLD has been identified at several locations in the county, including Core Creek Park, Bowmans Wild Flower Preserve and private properties in Buckingham itself.

While the American beech (*Fagus grandifolia*) appears to be most susceptible, all species of beech (*Fagus* spp.) across the eastern United States are at risk. The disease is caused by *Litylenchus crenatae* ssp. *mccannii* (LCM), a nematode that parasitizes tree leaves. BLD is easily recognized by its distinctive dark green interveinal banding pattern on symptomatic leaves, though it can be more difficult to identify early in species with dark leaves, such as the copper beech (*Fagus sylvatica* 'Purpurea').

The dark bands in leaves become evident in early spring as leaves emerge fully symptomatic. Under high levels of infection, symptoms become more pronounced; leaves become leathery and crinkled. These bands are due to cellular damage caused by nematodes in the leaf buds. In forests heavily impacted by BLD, it may look like there is a drought that is impacting only beeches. It takes around 5 years for BLD to kill a large beech, meaning there may be time to act if you have an affected tree on your land.

BLD can be treated in yard trees by injections of thiabendazole (like Arbotect 20-S) or Fluopyram. Other products that show promising results against BLD are potassium phosphite, potassium polyphosphate, and other potassium fertilizers. The recommended application rate is 2 fl. oz. of phosphite products mixed with 14 oz. of water for every inch of diameter, applied at the base of the infected tree.

Bottom line: BLD can be effectively treated if caught early. So, know the signs and *act* if you suspect you have a tree with BLD.

Beech Leaf Disease

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