

MASTERGARDENER

Are the Madrone's dying?

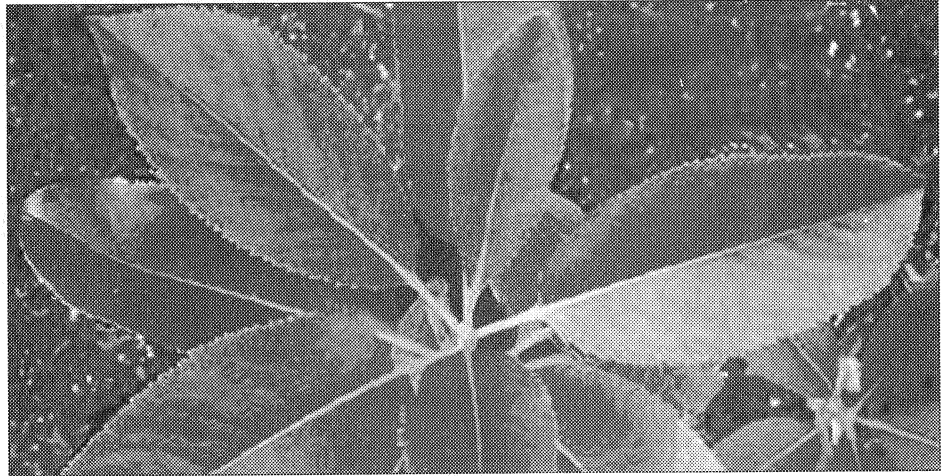
By R. JEANNE REHWALDT

We have received several calls at the Master Gardener clinic regarding the health of Pacific Madrone (*Arbutus menziesii*) trees around the county. Clients are wondering why they all appear to be dying. If you take a trip up Highway 3 north from Shelton toward Allyn, you will notice most of the Madrone trees seem to be affected.

Jenny Glass, Plant Diagnostician at WSU Research and Extension Center in Puyallup, has released a statement about what is happening to Madrone trees all over the area. The damage being observed is known as leaf spot. She notes that the problem is present in other counties and states too.

They have badly damaged Madrones at WSU Puyallup. Ms. Glass has seen damaged plants in Seattle and Whidbey Island, and heard reports from Oregon and the San Juan Islands. She states that this is a common problem over the past year. Alas, nothing practical can be done for the trees. Go to: <http://plant-disease.ippc.orst.edu/ShowDisease.aspx?RecordID=704> for general recommendations for leaf spot on Madrone.

Dr. Marianne Elliott, at WSU Puyallup, has determined a cold temperature pathogen *Phaciidiopcnis washingtonensis* (also a crabapple canker pathogen and a stored apple rot) is responsible for much of the damaged leaves. WSU would like to create a map of the foliar blight in the western



Courtesy photo

These are healthy leaves of a Pacific Madrone.

United States. If you are out in the woods and have noticed this problem on madrone, you can help. We are also interested in the health of madrones in areas without severe foliar blight symptoms. Digital photos of the trees and the site are also welcomed. To participate, please visit: http://www.puyallup.wsu.edu/ppo/madrone/diseases/foliar_blight_2011.htm.

We are concerned that many madrones have been under so much stress by this problem that they may die. However, Dr. Elliott thinks the cold weather is a key factor too. If the temperatures are not conducive again next winter, the problem may be less dramatic and give the plants some time to recover. Another colleague traveling south in Oregon saw afflicted trees (100 percent of the canopy). He said it made our trees look healthy by comparison. At this point it is all a guessing game,

and people are trying to follow up with research.

What should you do for Madrone trees on your property? Cultural control can help slow the spread of this disease. Rake up and destroy fallen leaves. Prune trees to ensure good air circulation, remembering to clean the pruning tools before using them on another plant. Mouthwash works really well as a pruning tool cleanser and is less harsh on the metal than bleach.

For more information about gardening or plant pest and diseases, please visit the Master Gardener Plant Clinic on Mondays from 12 to 3 p.m. at the WSU Mason County Extension office. You can also talk with a Master Gardener this Saturday May 28 at the Shelton Farmer's Market or the Harstine Farmer's Market. You can contact the Plant Clinic by phone at 427-9670 Ext. 687.