



Press Release

From London Tree Officers Association (LTOA)

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

9 December 2013

Massaria Disease of Plane Trees

A practical management guide to massaria disease of Plane has been released by the London Tree Officers Association (LTOA), available by free download from www.ltoa.org.uk. The disease, Massaria (*Splanchnonema platani*), affects London Plane trees (*Platanus spp.*). It presents a real challenge for managers of Plane trees in the built environment as the fungus appears to take advantage of branches predisposed by drought stress, leading to larger branches being affected, that are then shed. Apart from a few isolated reports of Massaria in the UK, Massaria has only been recorded in London since 2007.

The LTOA have produced a guidance document for tree managers providing a balanced and proportionate response to the problem. The LTOA felt it was well placed to write this guidance document after working with Treework Environmental Practice and the Arboricultural Association.

The purpose of this guidance document is to provide a framework for understanding the problem affecting London Planes, and for gathering and communicating evidence about the disease. The

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LTOA advocates that it is important to record information in a standard format that can be collated to achieve a uniform understanding of Massaria. We have developed a detailed inspection sheet as part of the guidance document. This approach will underpin the formulation of both short term and long-term management guidance, inspection protocols, and inform professionals involved in managing individual trees and populations of Plane trees.

The LTOA's stance is to ensure that unnecessary and inappropriate intervention is avoided and that there is a measured and well-informed basis for managing and communicating the risks that may arise from Massaria.

Jake Tibbetts, chair of the LTOA, said "The biggest risk posed to the London Plane tree population is from a disproportionate response to the problem, driven through fear of an over exaggerated perception of public safety risk. This is because the unnecessary pruning or felling of London's Plane trees would be significantly detrimental to both the tree and human populations of London.

Management of the risks associated with Massaria requires no more than the application of existing management approaches. Management is also concerned with how resources are prioritised and allocated and needs to take account of the cultural care of the trees and their growing environment. Not to do so is to put future generations of Londoners at risk from loss of canopy and its associated impacts on quality of life."

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For more tree advice please contact Becky Hesch, Executive Officer on 020 7974 4124 or visit www.ltoa.org.uk.

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---NOTES FOR EDITORS---

High resolution images are available upon request – please contact as above.

The London Tree Officers Association (LTOA) provides an information network for the exchange of views, experiences and ideas on trees and their management. The Association dates back to 1982 and aims to enhance the management of the Capital's trees and woodlands. It involves local authority Tree Officers in all 33 London Boroughs from which there are approximately 130 members and an associate membership scheme of approximately 55 members. The LTOA is funded by London Borough subscriptions and an associate member scheme. For more information take a look at the LTOA website at www.ltoa.org.uk.

For further industry comment, the LTOA have members and key influencers within the fields of:

Massaria	Oak Processionary Moth (OPM)	Tree Canopy Cover
CAVAT	Dog damage to trees	Street Trees
Planting	Tree Maintenance	Risk Limitation Strategy for tree root claims

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