

**Problem:** Root Diseases of Juniper - *Pythium*, *Phytophthora*, and *Rhizoctonia*

**Host Plants:** Upright and spreader juniper species.

**Description:** Roots of junipers occasionally are damaged by soilborne fungi such as *Pythium*, *Phytophthora*, and *Rhizoctonia*, parasitic nematodes, and/or excessive watering and poor soil drainage. Symptoms of root injury include stunting, foliage yellowing, branch dieback, low vigor, and sometimes rapid plant death. Damage is more common on prostrate and horizontal forms of juniper. Laboratory analysis is normally necessary to diagnose fungal pathogens associated with rotted roots.

**Recommendations:** To avoid root rots, plant junipers in well-drained soils and away from locations where water has a tendency to puddle or stand for extended periods. Do not use nonporous, plastic mulches as a weed barrier in juniper plants. Plastic mulch inhibits water and air movement and is detrimental to root growth. Instead, select organic mulches for weed control in planting beds. Selections of *Juniperus horizontalis* and *J. sabina* appear to be particularly susceptible to root rots and should not be planted in heavy, poorly drained soils. Fungicide and/or nematicide soil drenches are sometimes used to control root rots in the nursery but are not frequently used in landscape plantings.

**References:**

1. [Tree & Shrub Problems in Kansas](#). K-State Research and Extension, Publication MF3132

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