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Want to know more?

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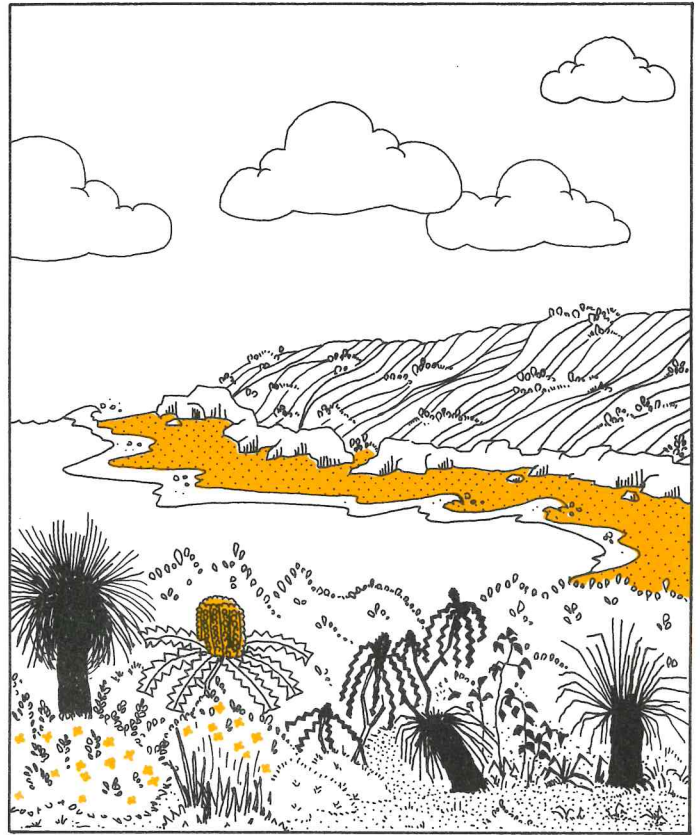
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50 Hayman Road
COMO, W.A.

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Local rangers and reserve officers will be able to
provide you with specific information on their
area.

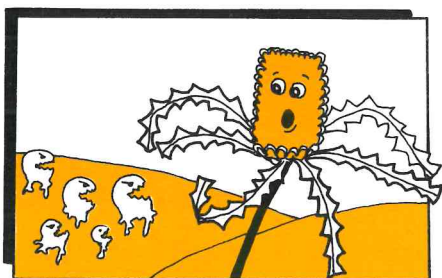
Your Local Ranger is:



DIEBACK DIEBACK

on the South Coast





DIEBACK : What is it?

Dieback in W.A. is a disease caused by the fungus *Phytophthora*. The most common kind is called *Phytophthora cinnamomi*, though there are other kinds as well.

The fungus was introduced from the tropics, probably in the nineteenth century. It is microscopic and lives in the soil, often being carried by water above or below the ground. Plants die when the fungus infects their roots, because their roots rot and they can't take up water.

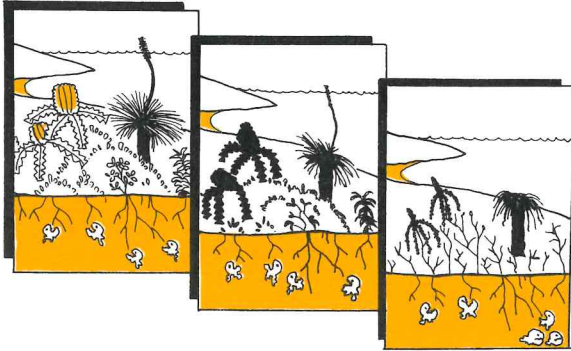
Although you can't see the actual fungus, you can certainly see where it has been. Because infected plants are deprived of water they often look similar to plants dying of drought.

Of the 900 or so plants that dieback can kill, most, like banksias and dryandras, die very quickly. Their leaves turn brown or yellow and, unlike some burnt plants, they will never resprout.

Some trees, such as jarrah, can fight the fungus in their roots for years, and die back slowly. Hence the common name for the disease is 'dieback'.

Where is it?

The fungus is widely spread throughout the south-west, but fortunately some of our national parks are still free of the disease.



The south coast areas are particularly at risk because the climate is warm and moist for most of the year. Dieback thrives in warm and moist conditions because it is a tropical fungus.

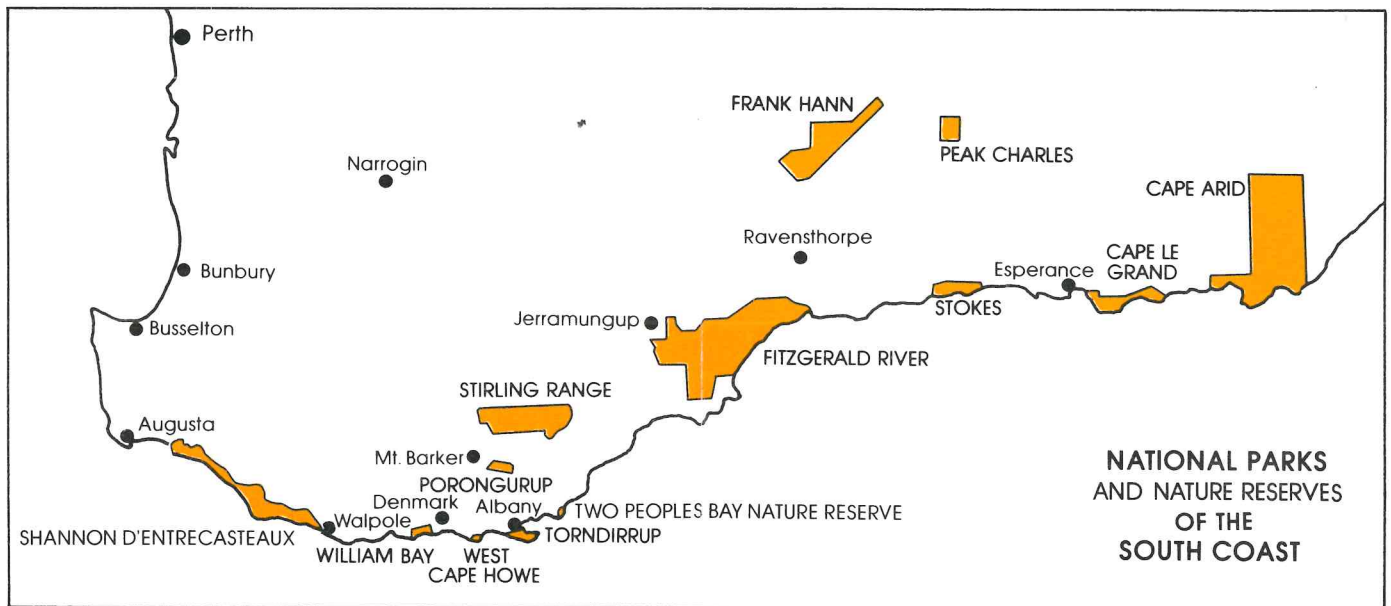
Unfortunately, many of the plants in the South Coast Region have very little resistance to dieback.

Why must we stop its spread?

The National Parks and Reserves of the South Coast Region contain combinations of plants and animals found nowhere else in the world. Unfortunately a high percentage of the plant species in this area can be killed by the dieback fungus.

As animals depend on plants for food, shelter, and nest sites, when the vegetation dies, they die. This leads to the loss of entire communities of native plants and mammals.

Once the dieback fungus has invaded a piece of bush there is, at present, no cure.



It is important to stress that dieback is not restricted to forests and national parks. It is a community problem, because the fungus can also be spread to farms, roadside vegetation or home gardens.

An increasing number of shires and departments are conscious of this risk and are seeking advice and help from CALM.



How does it spread?

Dieback fungus has two types of spores. The small spore is very active and swims in water, whereas the large spore is formed in the roots of plants and is inactive. Both spores can reproduce the fungus.

Dieback spreads downhill with waterflow very quickly. It moves uphill more slowly. Sometimes it can move from plant to plant if their roots are touching.

The large spores remain in the soil and anything which moves the infected plants or soil from one place to another will also spread the infection.



One of the main ways in which the fungus can spread, therefore, is on the underbodies and wheels of cars and machines. Four-wheel drives and heavy earth-moving equipment are particularly likely to move soil in this way. But under certain conditions people may also spread the fungus, just by walking.

How can you help stop the spread?

Because vehicles are a common way of spreading dieback, it is sometimes necessary to close tracks and footpaths to restrict access to certain areas.

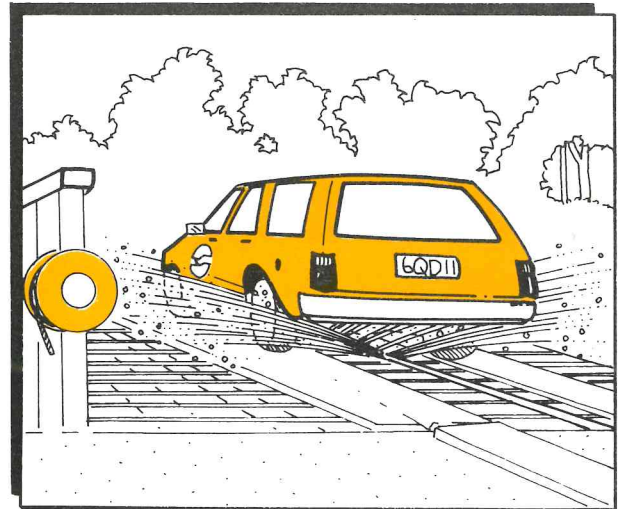
If you visit the south coast please keep to well-formed, well-drained roads and obey 'road closed' signs. By doing this you will be helping to protect these areas from the spread of dieback disease.

By acting now to prevent dieback spreading on the south coast we will avoid having to close off large areas in the future. For us to succeed in this, however, it is essential to have your cooperation.

What is CALM doing to stop the spread?

The Department of CALM is committed to preventing the spread of dieback.

We keep to very strict measures about our own hygiene. We carry out only essential work on roads and firebreaks. All CALM vehicles and machinery are washed down after working in dieback areas, and roads are upgraded so that it is less likely that vehicles will pick up infected soil and spread dieback to uninfected areas.



CALM scientists are also carrying out research into the nature of the disease and how it spreads in order to help control it.