

A BARK DISEASE OBSERVED ON EUCALYPTUS SALIGNA

by John McCormick

Until fairly recently, Eucalyptus saligna had been a tree without blemish. However, a bark disease has taken hold in Sydney blue gum plantations throughout the Dwellingup division and elsewhere.

The first symptom of the disease is the appearance of orange coloured patches on the bark of the tree boles (see photo 1). The cracking continues through into the cambium, thence a small amount of gum effusion takes place (see top left and bottom right hand side of photo 2). Beneath these areas the wood has been depressed. The symptoms tend to indicate an attack by one (or more) bark inhabiting fungi of the group Ascomycetes. A second or secondary attack can be seen as small round pits, three millimetres in diameter, greyish white in colour strung out along the cracks in the inner bark. Beneath these pits there is a brown rot which has not as yet (April 1981) reached the cambium.

A tree that has borne the infection for at least two years can be seen in photo 3. Areas of orange bark are present with gum patches from the previous year's infection.

As is in character with smooth barked eucalypts, Euc. saligna sheds its outer bark annually. The trees in photo 4 have done so revealing the form of bole distortion that takes place as a result of the orange bark disease. Affected trees are made prone to attack by other invaders. In this case, termites and polyporous fungi are in evidence where basal cankering has taken place. More important is the invasion of 'orange bark' areas by an unknown borer (see photo 5). Should these borer attacks persist, a considerable amount of timber degrade will occur in infected trees. Meanwhile, the trees appear to retain their normal vigour and have healthy foliage.

O.B.D. was first observed on 20 February, 1980 in the Scarp Road plantings and later that month in the Maradong Road plantings - other sightings, Karnet and Willowdale.

First borer invasion: borer active December, 1980.

The spread of the disease since February, 1980 when less than 10% of the Scarp Road trees showed any symptoms of the disease is remarkable for at present virtually all trees in the Scarp Road area are infected.



Photo 1. Cracked orange patches on E. saligna



Photo 2. Orange bark disease - advanced stage - Scarp Road.



Photo 3. Badly infected Sydney blue gum - Scarp Road.



Photo 4. Bole distortion brought about by disease.
Note borer attack near base of central tree.



Photo 5. Borer attack in orange patch Euc. saligna - Maradong Road

Photographs by Les Harman