

Catalpa

(*Catalpa speciosa* – Northern Catalpa; *Catalpa bignonioides* – Southern Catalpa)

Catalpa is a hardy, fast-growing ornamental tree known for its **huge heart-shaped leaves**, **showy white flowers**, and long bean-like seed pods. In Colorado, Catalpa is generally resilient but can experience issues with **leaf spots**, **canker diseases**, **borers**, **mildew**, and **environmental stress** in compacted soils.



Joe Boggs, OSU Extension

Seasonal Pest & Disease Calendar

Icons: 🌸 Spring | ☀️ Summer | 🍂 Fall | ❄️ Winter

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Active Season</u>	<u>Icons</u>
Catalpa sphinx caterpillar	Insect/defoliator	Summer	☀️
Scale insects	Insect	Spring crawlers; visible year-round	🌸 ❄️

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Active Season</u>	<u>Icons</u>
Verticillium wilt	Fungus	Spring–Fall	🌸🌻🍂
Leaf spot (various fungi)	Fungus	Spring–Summer	🌸🌻
Powdery mildew	Fungus	Summer–Fall	🌻🍂
Cytospora canker / Nectria canker	Fungus	Spring–Fall	🌸🌻🍂
Environmental stress (drought/compaction)	Abiotic	Summer–Fall	🌻🍂

Pest & Disease Guide (Homeowner-Friendly)

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Common Symptoms</u>	<u>Treatment & Management</u>
Catalpa Sphinx Caterpillar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heavy defoliation in mid–late summer • Large black/white or yellow/black striped larvae • Quick leaf loss but tree usually recovers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hand-pick if low branches • Pro treatment if severe • Trees often releaf later in season
Scale Insects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sticky honeydew • Black sooty mold • Hard or cottony bumps on twigs • Yellowing leaves 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treat crawler stage in late spring • Horticultural oil in late winter • Prune infested branches

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Common Symptoms</u>	<u>Treatment & Management</u>
Verticillium Wilt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sudden one-sided wilting • Brown or green streaks under bark • Progressive dieback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No cure—manage stress • Prune out affected limbs • Deep watering and mulch improve survival odds
Leaf Spot (Various Fungi)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brown/black blotches on leaves • Early leaf drop • Most severe in wet springs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rake up fallen leaves • Improve airflow • Fungicides rarely needed
Powdery Mildew	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • White, powdery coating on leaves • More common in shaded, humid sites • Reduced growth if severe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prune to improve airflow • Avoid overhead watering • Fungicide only in severe cases
Cytospora / Nectria Canker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sunken bark areas • Discolored sapwood • Branch dieback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prune out infected limbs back to branch collar • Sanitize tools • Improve vigor—no chemical cure
Environmental Stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaf scorch • Yellowing • Sparse canopy • Early leaf drop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deep water every 2–3 weeks • Reduce soil compaction • Mulch 2–4" under canopy

When to Worry vs. When It's Cosmetic

● When to Worry (action recommended)

- Rapid one-sided wilting (possible **Verticillium wilt**)
- Heavy sphinx caterpillar infestations defoliating the tree
- Multiple cankers with progressing branch dieback

- Large-scale scale infestation with sooty mold
- Early-season defoliation year after year

These may require **professional evaluation and targeted treatment**.

● **Mostly Cosmetic (monitor only)**

- Light mildew in shaded areas
- Minor leaf spotting in wet years
- Occasional late-summer caterpillars
- Slight scorch during heat waves
- Early leaf drop in drought

Catalpa is naturally tolerant and often rebounds well with **proper watering and minimal stress**.