

Chokecherry

(*Prunus virginiana* — includes common purple-leaf varieties like 'Schubert' and Canada Red Chokecherry)

Chokecherry is a popular small tree/large shrub in Colorado, especially purple-leaf cultivars. It is **beautiful but prone to several significant issues**, including **black knot**, **aphids**, **borers**, **leaf spot**, **tent caterpillars**, and **environmental stress**. Black Knot is the **most serious disease**—common and often fatal without removal.



Seasonal Pest & Disease Calendar

Icons: Spring | Summer | Fall | Winter

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Active Season</u>	<u>Icons</u>
Black Knot (major issue)	Fungus	Visible year-round; spreads Spring–Summer	
Aphids	Insect	Spring–Fall	
Western tent caterpillar	Insect/defoliator	Spring–Early Summer	

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Active Season</u>	<u>Icons</u>
Borers (shot hole, roundheaded, flatheaded)	Insect/borer	Summer	
Leaf spot / shot hole disease	Fungus	Spring–Summer	 
Cytospora & other cankers	Fungus	Spring–Fall	  
Environmental stress (heat/drought)	Abiotic	Summer–Fall	 

Pest & Disease Guide (Homeowner-Friendly)

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Common Symptoms</u>	<u>Treatment & Management</u>
Black Knot (Most Serious Problem)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hard, black, swollen galls on branches • Rapid spread year to year • Branch death beyond infection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prune 6–12" BELOW the knot (winter best) • Sanitize tools between cuts • Remove severely infected trees • Fungicides not reliably effective
Aphids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sticky honeydew • Sooty mold on leaves • Curling new leaves • Attracts ants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hose-rinse foliage • Encourage lady beetles • Systemic treatments if severe
Tent Caterpillars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Silk webs in branches • Chewed foliage • Defoliation of sections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove webs by hand early • Pro treatment if widespread • Trees typically releaf

Problem	Common Symptoms	Treatment & Management
Borers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oozing sap • Sawdust-like frass • Round or oval exit holes • Branch dieback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce stress—borers prefer weakened trees • Deep watering & mulch • Pro preventive sprays in active years
Leaf Spot / Shot Hole Disease	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small round brown spots • Holes where spots drop out • Early leaf drop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rake leaves in fall • Improve airflow • Avoid overhead irrigation • Fungicide seldom required
Cytospora & Other Cankers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sunken bark patches • Girdled twigs • Amber sap oozing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prune affected limbs • Sanitize tools • No chemical cure—improve vigor
Environmental Stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaf scorch • Early yellow or red leaves in summer • Twig dieback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deep water every 2–3 weeks • Maintain mulch ring • Avoid planting in high-heat reflected areas

When to Worry vs. When It's Cosmetic

● When to Worry (action recommended)

- Black, swollen fungal knots present on branches or trunk
- Progressive dieback near black knot infections
- Significant borer exit holes or frass piles
- Large tent caterpillar nests causing major defoliation
- Repeated leaf drop early in the season

- Multiple cankers appearing across limbs

Black Knot can **kill a chokecherry within a few years** if not managed aggressively.

● **Mostly Cosmetic (monitor only)**

- Minor aphid activity with light honeydew
- Small leaf spots or mild shot hole disease
- Occasional tent caterpillar webs (removed early)
- Slight scorch during heat waves
- Early fall color during drought years

These issues usually resolve with **watering, pruning, and normal seasonal changes**.