

Mountain Ash

(*Sorbus aucuparia* — European Mountain Ash; *Sorbus americana* — American Mountain Ash)

Mountain Ash is a beautiful ornamental tree with **white spring flowers**, **bright orange-red berries**, and **smooth gray bark**. In Colorado, however, it is **one of the more challenging species** due to heat stress, alkaline soils, and susceptibility to **borers**, **fire blight**, **rust**, **scale**, and **leaf spot diseases**.



Seasonal Pest & Disease Calendar

Icons: Spring | Summer | Fall | Winter

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Active Season</u>	<u>Icons</u>
Fire blight (major issue)	Bacteria	Spring–Early Summer	
Aphids	Insect	Spring–Fall	
Scale insects	Insect	Spring crawlers; visible year-round	

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Active Season</u>	<u>Icons</u>
Mountain ash sawfly	Insect/defoliator	Summer	
Borers (especially roundheaded ash borer)	Insect/borer	Summer	
Rust (<i>Gymnosporangium</i> spp.)	Fungus	Summer	
Leaf spot diseases (fungal)	Fungus	Spring–Summer	 
Environmental stress (heat/drought)	Abiotic	Summer–Fall	 

Pest & Disease Guide (Homeowner-Friendly)

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Common Symptoms</u>	<u>Treatment & Management</u>
Fire Blight (Most Serious Problem)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sudden blackened shoots • “Shepherd’s crook” curled twigs • Oozing bacterial cankers • Blossom blight in spring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prune 8–12" below infected wood (late winter preferred) • Sanitize tools between cuts • Remove severely infected trees • Antibiotic sprays only by pros and only during bloom
Aphids	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sticky honeydew • Sooty mold • Leaf curling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hose-rinse leaves • Encourage predators (lady beetles) • Systemic insecticide if severe

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Common Symptoms</u>	<u>Treatment & Management</u>
Scale Insects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sticky honeydew • Sooty mold • Hard bumps on twigs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treat crawler stage in late spring • Horticultural oil in late winter • Prune heavily infested twigs
Mountain Ash Sawfly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skeletonized leaves • Defoliation mid-summer • Small green/orange larvae feeding in groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hand remove small infestations • Pro treatment if canopy loss becomes severe
Borers (Roundheaded Ash Borer)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Round exit holes • Branch dieback • Oozing sap or frass 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid stress—borers attack weakened trees • Deep water & mulch • Preventive trunk sprays by professionals if needed
Rust (<i>Gymnosporangium</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Orange gelatinous spore horns on nearby junipers • Yellow leaf spots turning orange/red • Premature leaf drop 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove infected leaves • Avoid planting near junipers (alternate host) • Fungicide sometimes helpful in severe cases
Leaf Spot Diseases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brown/black leaf blotches • Early leaf drop in wet springs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve airflow • Rake leaves • Usually cosmetic
Environmental Stress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaf scorch • Wilting in heat • Sparse canopy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deep water every 2–3 weeks • Mulch to cool soil • Avoid hottest, driest planting sites

When to Worry vs. When It's Cosmetic

● When to Worry (action recommended)

- “Shepherd’s crook” shoots or blackened blossoms (fire blight)
- Rapid dieback or spreading cankers

- Repeated sawfly defoliation affecting tree vigor
- Numerous borer exit holes or sap oozing
- Severe leaf yellowing and premature leaf drop
- Chronic decline in hot, dry sites (common on Front Range)

Fire blight is **the leading cause of Mountain Ash decline** in Colorado.

Mostly Cosmetic (monitor only)

- Light leaf spotting in spring
- Minor aphid activity
- A few scale insects on small branches
- Occasional sawfly feeding
- Early color change in drought years

These typically improve with **proper watering and seasonal recovery**.