

CONTINUED LEAF DISEASE OUTBREAKS ACROSS TEXAS

Abundant rains have continued to fall across most areas of Texas all summer and into the early fall. These rains coupled with abundant humidity from the Gulf have extended the early summer symptomatic outbreaks of leaf disease in oaks, specifically live oaks, this year. Oaks are still experiencing significant leaf drop (defoliation) throughout their canopies and especially on the lower half of the tree. Affected trees look very thin and sickly from a distance. Their fallen leaves on the ground appear spotted or mottled with blotches colored yellow, brown, and light-green. However, the live oaks are still putting on a sustained growth flush starting in mid August and extending into October. This can be seen as long twig extensions (candling) at the outer edge of the canopies

As we cautioned in early summer, this defoliation is not oak wilt. This problem is only confined to the leaf tissues. Branches remain alive and viable for new leaves to form still this fall or next spring. The trees are not dying. Fungicides are ineffective as infection occurred earlier in the year. Raking up and disposing of the fallen leaves on the ground is a good strategy to remove the local inoculum. This defoliation is a natural occurrence and something that typically happens to the oaks in high rainfall years. This year is different since the rains have continued to come since late winter and leaf disease conditions and subsequent leaf defoliations have persisted all summer.

Again, this is not oak wilt. Oak wilt leaf symptoms are completely different. Also a pattern of mortality in the stand of trees over time is not apparent, i.e. an infection center radiating out over the landscape for several years.

The oaks will recover and put on new leaves. This year's excellent growing conditions will carry over into next year's growth and the oaks of Texas will continue to grow and provide us with their many benefits.