



# INTRODUCTION TO OAK WILT IN TEXAS

## WHAT IS OAK WILT?

Oak wilt is an infectious tree disease caused by a fungus. All oak trees are susceptible to this potentially deadly disease. Thousands of acres in Central Texas have already been affected by oak wilt.

## WHY SHOULD YOU CARE?

Oak wilt can impact entire communities. Infected trees usually die if they are not treated quickly by a qualified arborist. This can affect aesthetics, decrease property value, and be expensive to manage. Ignoring this disease is costly. Prevention is key.

## HOW DOES IT SPREAD?

**Above Ground By Beetles:** The oak wilt fungus can produce spores on red oaks that it has killed. These spores are inadvertently transported by beetles feeding on the fungus. If these beetles land on a fresh wound or pruning cut on an uninfected oak, the spores may enter and infect a new tree.

**Below Ground Through Root Connections:** Once a new infection starts, the fungus may spread from tree to tree through an interconnected root system. Trees as far as 200 feet apart or more may be at risk. The fungus can spread as rapidly as 75 feet per year.

## HOW TO RECOGNIZE OAK WILT

Look for defoliation and death of oak trees expanding from a central location. Live oaks will typically defoliate and die in 3-6 months while red oaks may die within 4-6 weeks. The most characteristic symptom of oak wilt is yellow and brown leaf veins in live oaks known as veinal necrosis. Sweet smelling fungal mats may form under the bark of dead red oaks in the spring. Laboratory isolation of the fungus is recommended to confirm the diagnosis. When in doubt, a trained expert should be consulted.





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## HOW TO REDUCE THE RISK OF OAK WILT

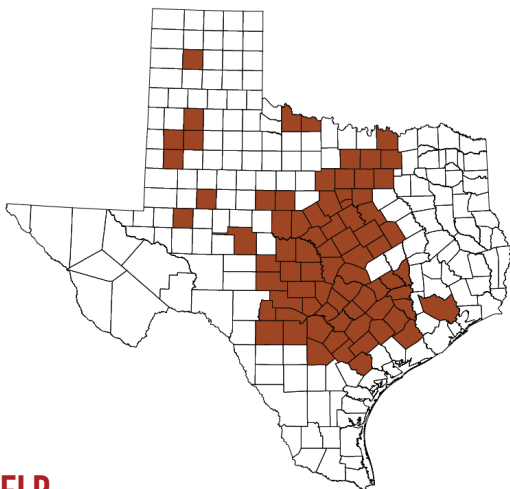
- Avoid pruning oak trees from February 1 to June 30.
- Make proper pruning cuts.
- Paint all oak wounds/cuts/stumps immediately with any type of paint.
- Never store infected red oaks for firewood use.

## HOW TO MANAGE OAK WILT

- Prevent new infections by following the steps above.
- Improve landscape resilience by planting diverse tree species.
- If your trees are affected or at risk, consult with an Oak Wilt Qualified Arborist.
- Trench at least 4 feet deep and 100 feet away from trees with symptoms to stop the spread of oak wilt through tree roots.
- Preserve high-value trees with propiconazole fungicide injections. Fungicide does not stop root transmission of the disease, but it can save individual trees.
- Burn, bury, or chip infected red oaks.
- Communicate with neighbors to monitor the infection area.

## COUNTIES WITH CONFIRMED OAK WILT CASES

AS OF DECEMBER 2022



## GET HELP

If you suspect that your tree has oak wilt or you need more information on how to prevent oak wilt, contact Texas A&M Forest Service for assistance and visit [texasoakwilt.org/getting-help/find-my-forester](https://texasoakwilt.org/getting-help/find-my-forester).