

# **Oak Wilt Now in Braun Station West**

**Oak Wilt has spread from the greenbelt to the back side of Queen Heights between Boutry Heights and Cheviot Heights. The Texas Forest service is recommending that live oak trees within 75 feet of the infected trees be treated with a fungicide by a certified arborist. The best source for Oak Wilt information is with the Texas Forest Service at the website [www.texasoakwilt.org](http://www.texasoakwilt.org).**

Oak Wilt is one of the most destructive tree diseases in the United States. With the generous rain this spring, Oak Wilt is spreading rapidly through the inter-connected live oak root systems. Without action, we could lose our beautiful live oak trees which could reduce the attractiveness of our neighborhood as well as our property values.

## **Oak Wilt Q & A from the Texas Forest Service**

### **What is Oak Wilt?**

Oak Wilt is a disease caused by a fungus that clogs the water conducting vessels of infected trees, causing them to wilt and die.

### **What causes Oak Wilt?**

A fungus called *Ceratocystis fagacearum* causes Oak Wilt.

### **How does it spread?**

Oak Wilt can spread in two ways: 1) Underground, it spreads from one tree to the next through connected roots, thus forming expanding patches of dead and dying trees. Among live oaks, the rate of spread is about 75 feet per year and spreads more rapidly in years with generous rain. 2) Above ground, the Oak Wilt fungus can be carried by insects from infected red oaks to fresh wounds on uninfected trees.

### **How can I tell if my trees have Oak Wilt?**

Live Oaks and red oaks show distinctive symptoms when they are infected with Oak Wilt.

In **live oaks**, some leaves on infected trees may begin to show a characteristic pattern. The veins on the leaf will turn yellow or brown, while the rest of the leaf remains green. The tips of some leaves may also turn brown, or the leaves may turn yellow with only the veins remaining green. Once live oaks are infected most gradually drop leaves and die over a period of three months to a year. Some trees survive for many years in various states of decline.

In **red oaks**, leaf symptoms are less distinct. The main thing to watch for is the red oak whose leaves quickly turn pale green to brown, usually remaining attached to the tree for some time. Red oaks die more quickly than live oaks once they are infected with oak wilt. Once infected, the trees will die within two weeks to several months.

Special structures covered with spores (called fungal mats) may form beneath the bark on certain infected red oaks. These fungal mats make the tree especially contagious, because they are the source of fungal spores which can be carried by insects to infect new trees. Fungal mats are not known to occur on live oaks. In addition to visible signs of oak wilt, laboratory tests can be performed on the wood of both live oaks and red oaks to determine the presence of the fungus.

### **What is the cure for Oak Wilt?**

At this time there is no cure for Oak Wilt, so treatment involves suppression and prevention. Trenches stop the underground spread of Oak Wilt by breaking the root connections between the trees. In patches of dead and dying live oaks, trenches are placed 100 feet from the outermost trees showing Oak Wilt symptoms. In certain situations, individual trees can be saved by fungicide injections. This practice will not stop the spread of the fungus through interconnected roots and is not considered a cure. Also, infected red oaks should be immediately removed, and the wood burned or buried. This prevents fungal mats from forming on the wood and removed the source of fungal spores.

### **How can I prevent Oak Wilt?**

Prevention of Oak Wilt is in the hands of property owners and their neighbors with oak trees. All property owners with healthy oaks should

**immediately paint all wounds, including fresh pruning cuts, on live oaks and read oaks!** If possible, avoid pruning from February 1 to June 1. A coat of tree-wound paint acts as a barrier which stops any fungal spores carried by insects from entering the wound. After a few days, tree wounds are no longer susceptible for Oak Wilt infection, so painting old wounds is not beneficial. In addition, be very careful with firewood. Avoid oak firewood from trees infected with Oak Wilt. This firewood could contain fungal mats and/or insects carrying the Oak Wilt fungus. As a precaution, store firewood under clear plastic and bury the edges. Clear plastic traps the insects, and unlike black plastic, the insects cannot use light holes to escape.