

Only You Can Prevent Oak Wilt

Robert Edmonson-Biologist II-Texas Forest Service

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With spring just around the corner, so too is the threat of oak wilt: the deadly disease that has killed thousands of oaks in 72 counties in central and west Texas. The Texas Forest Service (TFS) reminds the citizens of Texas this is the prime season for starting new oak wilt infections.

New oak wilt infections are created when sap-feeding beetles carry oak wilt spores to fresh cuts or wounds on oaks. Tree sap from fresh wounds can attract sap-feeding beetles that may be carrying these oak wilt spores. When these spores are introduced to the wound, a new oak wilt infection is created. To prevent this from occurring, TFS recommends to:

1) Avoid pruning or wounding oaks from February through June.

2) Immediately paint cuts or wounds on oaks, regardless of season.

Wounding includes but is not limited to: pruning, construction activities, animal damage, land clearing, lawnmower or string trimmer damage, and storm damage.

Oak wilt spores and increased beetle activity occur in spring; therefore avoid pruning or wounding oaks during this most vulnerable time. Fresh wounds produce sap which in turn attract sap-feeding beetles; therefore apply paint to pruning cuts or other wounds immediately to prevent spore-carrying beetles from visiting your oak. Any type of paint will accomplish this task. These recommendations apply only to oaks as only oaks are susceptible to oak wilt.

Other preventative measures include using caution when selecting and transporting oak wilt killed firewood and destroying diseased red oaks that can potentially produce oak wilt spores. Please review the *Oak Wilt in Texas* section of this website for detailed information or contact your regional TFS forester.