

OAK WILT IS ON THE MOVE

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Spring has sprung. Birds are singing, trees are leafing out and, unfortunately, oak wilt disease is on the move. Texas Forest Service reminds the citizens of Texas that this time of year is the prime season for new oak wilt infections to start.

In spring, spores of this fungal disease may be transported by sap-feeding beetles from fungal mats on oak wilt-killed red oaks to fresh wounds on any species of oak, especially live and red oaks. It is extremely important to avoid wounding oaks from February through June. Any new wound may be susceptible to infection, including those produced by pruning, construction activities, livestock, land or “cedar” clearing, lawnmowers and string trimmers and storms. Sap from these wounds can attract beetles that may have previously picked up spores on an oak wilt fruiting mass on a red oak. Once the fungal spores are introduced to the wound, the fungus will invade the tree and a new oak wilt infection is created. To decrease the attractiveness of fresh wounds to these insects, always cover over any wound on any oak any time of the year. Any kind of paint will accomplish this task.

Millions of trees have been killed by this disease in over 65 counties of central and west Texas. In order to keep new infection centers from starting, it is essential to avoid wounding oaks in the spring and to paint any fresh wound that may occur any time of the year.