

# Oak Wilt: Silent Killer Spreads through Neighborhoods

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There's a disease that's threatening to take down one of South Texas' most majestic icons, the Live Oak Tree. Oak wilt is taking hold of an alarming number of Live Oaks in our area, and it's spreading quickly.

Oak wilt is a fungus that can turn a healthy Live Oak into dry firewood in just a matter of months. Kelly Green treated her trees for oak wilt.

"Immediately, when we found out a tree on our block had it and two at the end of the street, we immediately called to have them treated," Green told WOAI.

The Texas Forest Service says Fair Oaks Ranch has seen eight new oak wilt patches in the past year. The infestation starts with a small sap beetle.

"They'll feed and breed and pick up oak wilt spores on their body, and then they're attracted to fresh wounds," explains Mark Duff from the Texas Forest Service.

Meaning the beetles go to freshly pruned trees, and infects them.

One of the biggest concerns about oak wilt is how quickly it spreads among live oaks because live oaks, many times, have root systems that connect with each other. Spreading an average of 70 feet a year.

"The city is providing injection kits to the residents who want to try to treat their own trees," says Roy Thomas from the City of Fair Oaks Ranch.

The fungicide costs about 250 dollars a gallon. Prevention is cheaper. A pruning sealer or paint costs just a few dollars.

"Paint all the pruning cuts immediately after their done, and that creates a physical barrier," says Thomas.

That keeps that nasty beetle from attacking your pride and joy.

How do you know if your trees have oak wilt? Look for bronzing or browning of green leaves from the tips and margins down toward the leaf base. The brown discoloration follows the veins in the middle of the leaf.

To know more about prevention or how to treat a tree with oak wilt, go to [TexasOakWilt.org](http://TexasOakWilt.org).