



**The Proceedings of the 2<sup>nd</sup> National Oak Wilt Symposium**

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## PRELUDE

Fifteen years ago, in 1992, the first National Oak Wilt Symposium was held in Austin, TX. That symposium was held with a sense of urgency in the belief that valuable information concerning oak wilt would be lost without some attempt to document previous work on this destructive tree disease. Numerous older scientists who were key responders to the original oak wilt threat in North America were still available to summarize their contributions. There was also a need to review recent oak wilt research being conducted throughout the U.S. Several states were implementing management programs and there was a need to document their experiences in hopes of improving efforts everywhere. By all accounts, the first Symposium was a great success. Oak wilt, however, continues to be an important issue throughout many parts of the country. It was not a matter of if another oak wilt symposium would be held, but when.

The destructive impact of oak wilt in Texas still incites passion and determination to minimize losses of valuable trees. Nobody in Texas is more determined than members of the commercial arboricultural industry. Several arborists have been trying to raise interest in another oak wilt symposium for several years. Pat Wentworth, Russell Peters, Eugene Gehring and the leadership of the Texas Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture were among those making the strongest case. Progressive education of their industry has always been an organizational objective of Texas arborists, and recent advances in oak wilt research were considered to be sufficient for another meeting. But this was not the only reason given as justification for another National Oak Wilt Symposium. Assessment and management tools are being refined, new technologies are being developed, and a new, growing membership in the arboricultural industry were all given as further reasons that another meeting would be well received. Following the formation of an organizing committee, a prospective speaker list was compiled with the intent to explore interest in the idea at the national level. We were delighted when every prospective speaker contacted expressed enthusiasm for the meeting and committed to participating. These Proceedings are the result of their efforts.

A successful symposium requires contributions from many dedicated individuals and organizations. We particularly want to thank the following people and their respective organizations: Members of the organizing committee: Patrick Wentworth, Austin Tree Specialists; Russell Peters, Arborilogical Services, Inc.; Eugene Gehring, Urban Renewal, Inc.; Dr. Damon Waitt, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center; Dr. Thomas Greene, The Nature Conservancy; Dr. Michael Walterscheidt, International Society of Arboriculture, Texas Chapter; Dr. David Appel, Texas A&M University; and, from the Texas Forest Service, James Rooni, John Giedraitis, and Dr. Ronald Billings. We are particularly grateful to the International Society of Arboriculture, Texas Chapter, for sponsoring the Symposium and to the following cooperators: USDA Forest Service, Forest Health Protection, Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, The Nature Conservancy of Texas, the Texas AgriLife Extension Service, and the Texas Forest Service. Finally, we thank the following companies for providing the resources to offer a first class venue: Bartlett Tree Experts, Mauget, Inc., Rainbow Technology, Inc., and Oak Wilt Specialists, Inc. More than 100 scientists, foresters, arborists, and concerned citizens attended the 2<sup>nd</sup> National Oak Wilt Symposium. We truly hope that the meeting met their expectations. It certainly met ours, and we hope that we have now set a precedent for future oak wilt symposia.

David Appel and Ronald Billings, Editors



# **INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**





# WELCOME TO TEXAS

**James B. Hull**

Texas State Forester  
College Station, TX

Welcome to Texas - - - Y'all! We are honored to be hosting this prestigious symposium in Austin, and only 6 days after the 80<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature adjourned after being in regular session for the past 140 days. This is a process that occurs every two years in Texas, whether we need it or not! Austin is not only the home of the State Capitol, but also the orange and white University of Texas Longhorns. However, the Texas Forest Service is part of The Texas A&M University System, 100 miles northeast of here in College Station. In honor of our school colors, the Aggies have just about perfected a way of genetically causing all of the Texas Bluebonnets in Austin to have a rich maroon color!

Texas is a mighty big and extremely diverse state: Vast Pineywoods of East Texas; rugged mountains of Southwest Texas; rich agriculture in the Northwest high plains; tropical citrus and other agriculture in far South Texas; and the beautiful rolling hill country in between. Texas has over 350 miles of shoreline along the Gulf of Mexico; 1200 miles of international border with Mexico and 250 miles of international border with Louisiana! It is 885 miles across Texas from north to south, and 835 miles across from East to West.

Texas has six major tree regions, totaling over 29 million acres of forest lands. Now that we have finished our second year of completing a statewide Forest Inventory and Analysis, we are finding that we might actually have up to twice as many acres of forest as previously thought. Commercial forestlands in Texas are undergoing tremendous restructuring in ownerships. Where forest industry historically owned and provided world class forest management on approximately one-third of these forest, recent divestiture of these lands has seen these forests now in the hands of TIMO's and REIT's. The other lands belong primarily to individual/family forest owners (64.8%) and public owners (8.0%).

Texas also has a tremendous acreage of range and other open space, yet at the same time we are becoming identified as an urban state. Texas has three of the nation's ten largest cities, and five of the top twenty. Of the 22.5 million Texas residents, 84 percent live in or near cities. One of the biggest challenges to Texas is the population growth into the rural/urban interface. As example, of the 32,000 wildfires that burned in Texas in 2005-2006, 85% of those started within 2 miles of a Texas community.

I was named Texas State Forester in 1996, and since then many folks will tell you that it has been one disaster after another. While some of these disasters have been of my doing, others have been associated with unprecedented wildfires, ice storms, hurricanes, floods, southern pine beetle outbreaks, wind storms, and the Texas Forest Service had the lead role in the Columbia space shuttle recovery efforts in 2003.

With changing roles and responsibilities, the Texas Forest Service has made the commitments to work smarter and provide the role of leadership in several areas of forestry. Currently, our staff is leading development of the Southern Critical Forestland Assessment for the 13 southern states. This is an effort to identify the forested areas that are in most need of priority attention. We recently completed the Southern Wildfire Risk Assessment that provides GIS tools to identify the highest areas of wildfire risk for planning, fire prevention, mitigation and response activities.

Another Texas-size disaster has been oak wilt devastation across vast areas of the Texas Hill Country in Central Texas. Dr. Ron Billings and his Forest Pest Management team have made significant progress over the past 20 years in dealing with this massive problem. To most successfully deal with oak wilt, we have effectively integrated and coordinated it with our Forest Stewardship, Urban, and FIA programs. I am very proud of these accomplishments in this area and no doubt you will hear more about it while you are in Austin.

Thanks again for coming to Texas. While you are here it is our goal to prove to you our claim that Texas is the friendliest state in the United States. Y'all come back now!