

Oak Wilt

Disease Gaining Importance

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Forest Service
Northeastern Area State and Private Forestry



Description: Oak wilt is the most important disease of oak trees in the eastern United States, where it occurs in both residential and forested areas. It enters the tree via wounds and is spread by insects. Oak wilt can also spread when the roots of an infected tree graft with the roots of a healthy tree. Since the 1950s oak wilt has killed millions of trees in an area from Pennsylvania to Minnesota, and south to Texas and South Carolina. The disease is gaining in importance, as people move to oak-dominated woodlands and as high-value forests become infected. Recently, powerful spring storms in the upper Midwest damaged trees during the critical infection period, increasing the number of infection centers there.

Key Issues:

- Diagnosis can be difficult, since many agents including oak decline, bacterial leaf scorch, anthracnose, and bur oak blight can kill oaks.
- Preventing new disease centers and controlling the spread of existing centers requires a coordinated effort among key partners and landowners.
- Many infection centers span multiple ownerships across large areas.
- Priorities are to eradicate scattered infections and to control the disease in important recreation areas.

Accomplishments:

- Developed control techniques (stump removal) to pair with using the vibratory plow to disrupt root grafts
- Reduced the incidence of disease in high-value red oak forests on the Chequamegon/Nicolet National Forest and at other locations
- Continued control measures in high-value recreation areas on the Huron/Manistee National Forest, State and private lands in Michigan, and at other sites
- Began control activities in western Pennsylvania
- Continued to see positive results from eradication efforts in New York

Budget History:

Oak Wilt Control, Fiscal Year 2012						
<i>(Dollars, thousands)</i>						
Agency	National Forest Systems	Bureau of Indian Affairs	MI Dept. of Natural Resources	MI Tech University	PA Bureau of Forestry	U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Suppression Totals	\$30	\$21	\$40	\$60	\$110	\$5

Future Direction:

- Simplify field diagnosis.
- Develop a database to track incidence and spread.
- Improve early detection of outlier infection centers to aid in eradication.

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