

FACTS ABOUT OAK WILT



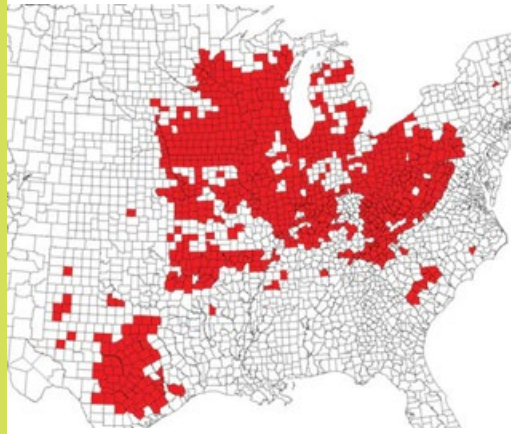
Oak Wilt Facts

Oak wilt is an aggressive fungus that impairs the flow of water to the tree's canopy and leaves. This disease kills thousands of oak trees each year in forests and communities throughout Michigan. These maps (right) show known locations of the disease in our nation and Michigan.

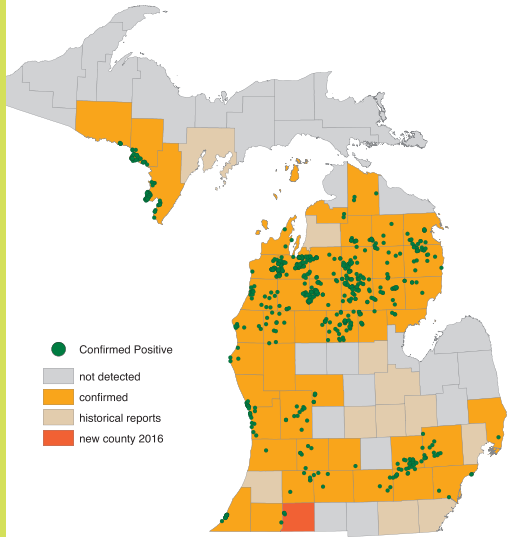
Transmission of the disease occurs in two ways. A primary path for transmission of the fungus is through interconnected (grafted) root systems. The disease can slowly spread through grafted roots and infect nearby oak trees.

Fungal spore mats may form under the bark of trees killed by oak wilt as weather warms the following year. Beetles attracted to the spore mats can transmit the fungal spores to a healthy oak tree with an open wound.

In Michigan, oak wilt is primarily a threat to red oaks. Once a red oak is infected, it will drop its leaves and die in a matter of weeks. White oaks can be infected, but are more resistant to mortality from the disease.



Oak wilt distribution map.



Oak wilt has been identified in these Michigan Counties.

INFECTED OAK WILT LEAVES

Red oak leaves will wilt and drop very quickly after subjected to the oak wilt fungus.

White oaks may show much slower signs of decline.

There is no current cure for the disease.



Red Oak

White Oak

Oak Wilt Prevention

- Wounds to oak trees can happen during construction and pruning activities or from storm damage. Wounds should be treated with a tree wound dressing or latex paint during moderate and high risk periods.
- Root systems of infected trees should be isolated.
- Infected trees need to be disposed of in a manner that prevents further infections.
- Do not transport infected wood to other locations.

Oak Wilt Risk Times

LOW RISK: Oct. 16 – March 14

MODERATE RISK: March 15 – April 14
July 16 – Oct. 15

HIGH RISK: April 15 – July 15

Consumers Energy is Doing its Part

During low-risk time, oak trees may be trimmed without the need for painting cuts. Consumers Energy will attempt to schedule planned line-clearing work in areas of higher oak wilt occurrence during this time of year.

According to current research, the risk of transmitting oak wilt is still low during the moderate risk time. Only the pruning cuts of oak trees trimmed in developed landscape areas during these periods will be treated with a tree wound dressing or latex paint.

Most overland transmission of oak wilt occurs during the high risk time frame, but can only occur if oak wilt already exists in the immediate area. Whenever practical during this time frame, pruning wounds on oak trees will be treated with a tree wound dressing or latex paint. Stumps will be treated with a herbicide to prevent regrowth and inhibit transmission of oak wilt spores.



Did You Know?

A threat for the spread of oak wilt over greater distances occurs when people move infected firewood from one location to another.

The year after tree mortality, spore mats develop under the bark of previously infected trees and firewood may introduce the disease to areas without oak wilt.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources recommends that anyone who suspects they have oak wilt-tainted firewood should cover it with a tarp all of the way to the ground, leaving no openings.

Oak Wilt Resources

Identification of an oak wilt infected tree is an important first step to prevent the spread of this disease. Red oaks that suddenly drop their leaves during summer months may be an indication of the presence of oak wilt. However, there are other diseases and insects that affect the health of oak trees and may be mistaken as oak wilt. Positive confirmation of oak wilt should be obtained from laboratory analysis.

To report a suspected oak wilt site, email DNR-FRD-Forest-Health@michigan.gov or call 517-284-5895.

Visit the Michigan DNR website for more information on the background, symptoms and prevention of oak wilt.

If interested, learn more about oak wilt and other forest health issues in Michigan at www.michigan.gov/foresthealth, or www.michiganoakwilt.org/.

The Oak Wilt Coalition is a new partnership between private, nonprofit and governmental organizations. Led by the Arboriculture Society of Michigan (ASM), the partnership includes representatives from Michigan State University, Michigan Departments of Natural Resources, Agriculture and Rural Development, ReLeaf Michigan, Michigan Forest Association, electric utilities (including Consumers Energy) and private companies.

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