

Oak Wilt Update

By Brian Colter, City Forester

Oak wilt is a fungal disease (*Ceratocystis fagacearum*) affecting all species of oaks in the Eastern United States and parts of Canada. Red oaks are especially susceptible, often dying within weeks of infection.

The disease spreads underground through root grafts and overland by beetles that spread fungal spores from tree to tree. Symptoms include premature leaf browning during the growing season and sudden leaf drop in the summer. Diagnosing this disease is difficult because symptoms are similar to other oak disorders.

Oak wilt expert, Dave Roberts, PhD, Michigan State University, told me he has never seen oak wilt in Grosse Pointe. In fact, there had been no recent confirmed cases of oak wilt in Wayne County until 2016 when it was discovered on Belle Isle. Over 200 hundred oaks were removed in an effort to isolate the fungus which was probably introduced onto Belle Isle from the movement of firewood. Grosse Pointe homeowners need to be prudent. Preventing the spread of oak wilt is the best form of management. DO NOT trim oak trees during the growing season. Trim oak trees during the winter months. Also, NEVER move firewood. Infected wood can spread the fungus to healthy trees.

As of March 12, 2019, there are 81 city owned oak trees. To date, wilt has not been diagnosed on city owned property.

For additional information visit michiganoakwilt.org.



Shumard oak logs on Belle Isle, fall 2017