

## Managing Oak Wilt in Hollywood Park

Oak wilt was discovered in Hollywood Park in February 1997. Since then, several attempts to stop the spread of the disease by severing the common root systems of live oaks with rock saw trenches have taken place. All of these trenches failed because the roots were not severed beyond five feet (depth limit of cutting wheel). Typically, five feet is a sufficient depth to sever all live oak roots. However, because of the karst (limestone caves) geology, roots are able to penetrate well beyond five feet – insight gained after the fact. Therefore, I am not recommending further trenching attempts to stop the oak wilt spread in Hollywood Park. The map below shows the current location of the oak wilt as compared to 2010. The area within the black shape represents the size of the oak wilt center, with the perimeter representing the active disease front. The disease is currently spreading in all directions at about 75 feet per year.

If your property lies within 100 feet of the disease, I recommend that you or a contractor treat your trees with fungicide. Hollywood Park Maintenance Department has the equipment available for you to treat your trees. All you need to do is check it out and view a video explaining the treatment procedures. Do not treat the trees after they begin to show veinal necrosis symptoms in the leaves, because it will then be too late as the trees are already getting their vascular system clogged up with the fungus. Also, do not treat trees beyond the 125 foot distance from the disease, since the chemical will wear off and not protect the trees. I also recommend that you plant a variety of non-oak native trees or shrubs such as cedar elm, Mexican plum, Texas redbud or Texas mountain laurel, so when or “if” the disease reaches your property, you already have an established oak wilt proof landscape. Feel free to drive by and see what I’ve done to my place at 112 Grand Oak.

Remember that we have an oak wilt ordinance in Hollywood Park. The ordinance states that any contractor that comes to your property to trim trees must get a permit. They pick these up at the Hollywood Park city office for \$50.00 and a copy of their driver license is made. The contractor gets a copy of the ordinance which requires that all pruning cuts on oaks shall be sealed with paint within one hour.

The best times to prune oaks are during the hottest or coldest months of the year. Spring pruning should be avoided because the sap beetle that vectors the disease is very active, the trees are more susceptible, and the fungal mats that produce oak wilt spores are forming during that time. Only red oaks (around here shumard, blackjack, and Spanish oaks) produce fungal mats. Also, be careful to not bring red oak firewood into the Park from an unknown source, since it may be harboring fungal mats. Standing dead live oaks do not represent a threat to spreading the disease.

The “How to Treat” video is available on-line at [www.texasoakwilt.org](http://www.texasoakwilt.org) Go to the “For Professionals” tab and select the treatment video. If you do not have a computer or are having problems with the download, just let me know. I can be reached at 210-494-1742 or e-mail at [mduff@tfs.tamu.edu](mailto:mduff@tfs.tamu.edu) I will furnish you a VHS video tape to view. The

chemical, Alamo or its generic equivalent is not a restricted-use pesticide, therefore you do not need a TDA applicator's license to purchase or apply the chemical. Remember that there is no cure for oak wilt. So do not be tempted by advertisements that promote fertilization, corn meal, mulch, etc. as a remedy for the disease. While it is a good idea to use these and other products to keep your landscape plants healthy in general, they will not do anything to prevent your oaks from dying of oak wilt.

There is an awful lot more to know about oak wilt that cannot be described in this article. If you have additional questions or are seeking more information, I urge you to visit the best website on the subject: [www.texasoakwilt.org](http://www.texasoakwilt.org)

Mark Duff