



by Lisa Marie Gee

Oak Wilt was first discovered in 1944 in Wisconsin and is now a serious tree disease in the eastern U.S. killing thousands of oaks each year. The DEC announced 10/25/16 that oak wilt has just been found in Canandaigua, NY and earlier this year was found in Islip. It was also noted in 2008 and 2013 in Glenville. It is believed to be native to the U.S.

Oak wilt is a vascular disease caused by the fungus, *Ceratocystis fagacearum*, which develops in the xylem of the oak trees. The fungus causes a gummy substance to form that prevents water transport up the tree. When the water transportation is

slowed this causes the leaves to wilt and drop off and eventually the tree will die. All oaks are susceptible but the red oak group dies much faster than the white oaks. The disease is spread either underground through the tree roots intermingling or above ground by beetles. Fungal spore mats form just under the bark in the spring and summer and emit a sweet odor which attracts the beetles.

Symptoms are very noticeable in the red oaks but are relatively nondescript in the white oaks. The leaves develop a brown coloration around the edges which progresses inward toward the mid vein. Branch die back may be visible at the top of the tree and will progress downward.

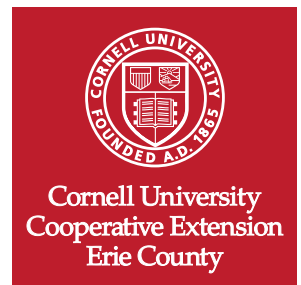
Steven Katovich, USDA Forest Service,  
Bugwood.org



Leaves will suddenly wilt and there will be leaf loss during the spring and summer. The fungal spore mats may form under the bark causing the bark to raise and split.

There is no known treatment at this time. Removal of infected trees and surrounding host oak trees is one option to help control this disease. Not pruning in late spring and summer can help by not having fresh wounds where the fungus can enter. Do prune between November and mid-April. If a wound does occur it is recommended to dress the wound with latex paint to deter the beetles from landing in the wound. Fungicides are not very effective on infected trees but some have been used on high risk trees every two years as a preventative treatment. It is also recommended not to transport wood from oak trees in infected areas as it could spread the fungus.

If you think your oak tree might be infected with this devastating disease you should report it to the DEC at 1-866-640-0652 or contact your local Cooperative Extension for assistance. 🖱️



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