

## What You Need to Know About Oak Wilt

### What is oak wilt?

- Oak wilt is an aggressive disease that can kill your oak trees by disrupting trees' sap flow.
- Red oaks are more susceptible than white oaks.
- This disease can do to oak trees what Dutch elm disease did to elms.

### How does oak wilt spread?

- Oak wilt is transmitted from diseased to healthy trees by two methods.
  - **Root graft transmission** is when the fungus spreads between underground root systems, traveling as far as 50' away. Much more common, this may account for up to 95% of oak wilt spread in Minnesota.
  - **Insects** are attracted to the sap that seeps from tree wounds and holes *and* the smell of oak wilt. Carrying oak wilt spores, these bugs unknowingly infect other trees—most often in summer.

### Pruning Restrictions

- Avoid pruning from April 1 to October 1. Instead, the safest time to prune is between November 1 and April 1.
- For white, bur, swamp white oaks as well as elms, proper pruning cuts will substantially reduce the likelihood of infection.

### Symptoms to Look For:

If your oak was pruned from April-October, watch for oak wilt signs.

- Now, in early August, is when you'll start to see symptoms, such as the wilting, browning or excessive shedding of green leaves and branch dieback. Edges and tips of leaves turn color first.
- If you see these warning signs, scrape off 1-2 inches of bark on a branch that has wilted leaves or premature leaf drop. Under the bark, look for streaking, which is a tell-tale sign of oak wilt.



### Control and Manage Oak Wilt

- Little can be done to help red oaks.
- Instead, focus on helping infected white oaks and reducing the spread of the disease.
- If one tree gets oak wilt, *all* nearby oak trees are at risk.
- Generally, you'll have to remove the infected tree and treat other oak trees with a fungicide to protect them.
- Your arborist may recommend a mechanical intervention since oak wilt most commonly spreads between root systems.

### I want to know more! Who should I ask?

- Contact Joe Gregory at [joe.gregory@davey.com](mailto:joe.gregory@davey.com)
- He can set up interviews with Davey experts, provide photographs and ensure you have everything you need for your story.