



We live in an area where oak wilt has been confirmed. Oak wilt is an often fatal tree fungal disease that can be spread two ways: underground through root grafts and overland through wounds or pruning cuts. The fungus infects the conducting tissue of the tree, leading to a rapid “wilt” characterized by veinal necrosis (the veins dying) of the leaves and canopy thinning. If untreated, live oaks usually die within six months to one year, and red oaks usually die within a few weeks. Live oaks and red oaks are the most commonly infected trees.



Figure 1. Live oak leaves showing veinal necrosis (yellow and brown veins).

Live oak trees up to 200 feet apart can be connected together through root grafts; the fungus can travel through these grafts and infect new trees, making it difficult to manage the underground spread of the fungus. Occasionally, neighbors initiate trenching projects to try and isolate the fungus; trenches dug at least 4 feet deep work about 70% of the time.

The impact of wilt can also be managed through fungicide injections. Trees that are in good condition and within 150’ of a symptomatic tree are the best candidates for injection. Trees that are showing some canopy loss and signs of stress may survive with an injection treatment but are not likely to resume a healthy, full canopy, so injection may not be the best use of resources. Proactive tree health care and oak wilt treatment options are unique to each tree, landscape and property owner; an Oak Wilt Qualified Arborist can help you decide management strategies according to the your relative risk of oak wilt, the condition of your trees, your landscape priorities and budget. To get help, visit: <http://texasoakwilt.org/find-a-vendor/vendor-directory/>.

Injecting trees with fungicide does not stop the spread of the fungus through the root system. Even if a tree has been injected, the fungus may still move through the root system and infect adjacent trees. This makes it very important to work with neighbors and inform each other when oak wilt has been identified. People are more likely to treat their trees preventatively and save tree canopy if they are aware of their risk of oak wilt.

When pruning oak trees, sanitize tools and spray all wounds immediately (any type of paint works). This limits the risk that an insect carrying fungal spores may land on a fresh pruning cut and create a new infection center. Another important strategy is to maintain a diversity of tree species throughout the community. Free trees may be requested through the City’s [NeighborWoods](#) program; contact [TreeFolks](#) to find out how to get free trees (<https://www.treefolks.org/free-trees/>).

Information provided for neighborhood distribution.

For additional information visit: <http://www.austintexas.gov/page/oak-wilt-suppression>.

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