

Oak Wilt Disease in the City of Grand Haven



From the Environment and Natural Resources Committee and the City of Grand Haven

Oak Wilt Disease has been found in oak trees in the Grand Haven area, including at Hoffmaster State Park, and in an area in the southwest part of the City.

What is it? Oak Wilt Disease is a fungus which attacks the vascular system of oak trees, preventing sap and nutrition from moving between the roots and the branches of the trees. Oak Wilt can kill large, healthy oak trees in a matter of weeks. Red oak, black oak, and northern pin oak are most susceptible. Leaves wilt, turn brown and fall off, and the trees die rapidly when infected. White oak, bur oak, and swamp white oak, are more resistant, can survive longer, and can be treated with fungicides.

Oak Wilt Disease is transmitted to healthy trees in two ways: It may be carried by sap-feeding beetles, moving from infected trees to damaged or recently-pruned trees. Avoid trimming of oak trees from May through July to reduce exposure to infection from beetles. It is also spread by roots which have grown together underground, or grafted, with nearby oak trees, as the fungus passes through the root systems. Trees infected with Oak Wilt, and trees which have died, must have their roots separated from adjacent healthy trees by trenching to prevent the spread. Dead trees should be removed after trenching, as the fungus under the bark of dead trees may still attract beetles and spread Oak Wilt.

Oak Wilt Disease can be difficult to identify. It has the potential to spread to oaks in large areas. With early detection and proper action, the number of trees lost to Oak Wilt can be limited.