

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Michigan's Oak Trees Face Grave Danger from Deadly Oak Wilt

The good news is that *everyone* can help prevent oak wilt

MICHIGAN — The Michigan Oak Wilt Coalition is a partnership of concerned private, nonprofit, and governmental organizations dedicated to building Oak Wilt Awareness. The reason why is that *people* can take action to prevent the spread of this disease.

“Oak wilt is different from other tree diseases where there is little people can do stop them from spreading,” says Julie Stachecki, ISA Certified Arborist and Co-Chair of the Michigan Oak Wilt Coalition’s awareness campaign, “like when Dutch Elm disease and Emerald Ash Borer took their toll on Michigan’s trees. Homeowners could not stop these pests from spreading. Oak Wilt is just as deadly, but with awareness and a few precautions, people can stop this deadly disease of oak trees from spreading through Michigan and beyond.”

Here are the keys to preventing the spread of oak wilt:

AVOID PRUNING from April 15 through July 15

Paint immediately if wounds occur

Prune oaks in winter when possible

DO NOT MOVE FIREWOOD

MAY IS OAK WILT AWARENESS MONTH

Michigan’s governor, has proclaimed May is [Oak Wilt Awareness Month](#) to bring statewide attention to the value of oaks to Michigan’s environment, recreation and wood products industries, and the need to raise awareness about prevention and management of oak wilt, a disease killing red oaks across the state every year.

May is often spring yard clean-up time for property owners and cottage re-openings. May is also during the highest risk period for oak wilt infections. *Preventing* oak wilt is the best strategy for protecting Michigan’s oaks, and that means preventing cuts or wounds during the high-risk infection period of April 15 – July 15.

When oaks are pruned or wounded, they attract native “sap beetles”, which carry disease spores from infected trees to open wounds on healthy oaks, starting new disease infections. Once infected, red oaks die rapidly, often within six weeks! The safest time to prune oaks is during the winter months. If

wounds do occur, paint them immediately with a pruning sealer or latex paint. Don't move oak firewood, which can carry the disease to new locations.

One oak wilt-killed tree leads to many killed trees because they are linked together by their roots. When an oak gets infected, the disease moves into its roots and to other oaks within the root system, infecting and killing the trees as it progresses. Pockets of dead oaks from oak wilt can span huge areas if left unchecked. Michigan needs oaks for wildlife habitat, soil stabilization, water filtration, and clean air. Oaks are also often highly valuable and beloved landscape trees that deserve to be protected.

Ruth Dorando Marcy and Julie Stachecki are Co-Chairs for the "May is Oak Wilt Awareness" campaign to alert people and prevent new infections. Ruth remembers Julie's passionate presentation on Oak Wilt in an MSU Extension Master Gardner course and came to a personal realization. She said, "This is something I can do to make a real difference for the State of Michigan and my community. Education on this disease can stop the spread of oak wilt and save thousands of trees." Ruth and Julie have been a team since 2018. Each year the Oak Wilt Awareness campaign gains momentum. In 2021, the campaign received a boost through a grant from Michigan DNR to broaden oak wilt awareness. The coalition has published informational brochures and posters for distribution through fourteen Michigan Welcome Centers and sponsor a May billboard along U.S. 23. "Trees take care of us; we depend on them for clean air and so much more. Now we need more people to help us save the trees. With Oak Wilt Awareness, we can make a real difference." says Ruth Dorando Marcy.

For more information about oak wilt, to report infections, and find trained specialists go to MichiganOakWilt.org. Watch for additional oak wilt information as the campaign kicks off in May!

The Michigan Oak Wilt Coalition is a partnership between private, nonprofit, and governmental organizations. Led by ISA Michigan, the partnership includes representatives from Michigan State University, Michigan Departments of Transportation, Natural Resources and Agriculture and Rural Development, ReLeaf Michigan, Michigan Forest Association, Michigan Green Industry Association, electric utilities, private companies, and others.

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	<p>RESOURCES:</p> <p>Download images and information here: https://www.michiganoakwilt.org/may-is-oak-wilt-awareness-month</p>
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Oak Wilt Awareness Co-Chair
Julie Stachecki (left) and Ruth Dorando Marcy
with a 200+ year old red oak.



Campaign graphic available for download
<https://www.michiganoakwilt.org/may-is-oak-wilt-awareness-month>

