

# Oak Wilt Disease

by Carolann Ogle and Carol Sobczak

When the arborist completed removal of my diseased plum tree, he was drawn to my Pin Oak tree whose canopy so beautifully shaded my yard. As he walked out he commented that it should be treated for Oak Wilt Disease. He said “Don’t wait too long.” The tree looked healthy to me! I hesitated to begin any treatment and decided to do some research. The cause of OWD is a fungus (*Bretziella fagacearum*) that is spread by a beetle. They feed on the fungus in the tree bark. (Editor: Nitidulid beetles are the most common carriers of Oak Wilt Disease. They are commonly called “sap beetles.”) I wanted to speak with an expert from the DEC for more information about the spread in our area. The expert, Jason told me of the traps and quarantine that were taking place in Canada in Ontario Province including Niagara on the Lake.

I asked whether to treat if there are no signs of disease. He assured me that “Watchful Waiting” was appropriate at the present time. I was reassured. I learned that Oak Wilt was being monitored for its spread and control. The closest area to WNY where Wilt has been found is in Canandaigua.

The fungus attacks the tree roots and bark and flows through the xylem causing blockages. The signs and symptoms are branch dieback in the canopy, browning leaves, dropping branches and eventually death of the tree. Leaves suddenly wilt in the spring and summer.

Management includes pruning at dormant stages in the late fall or winter. The trees can also be injected with a fungicide. Quarantine is important to prevent spread. There are precautions for the transfer of firewood and branches from the quarantined areas. The advice from the DEC was to watch and wait for signs and symptoms before acting.

If you think you might have seen signs of Oak Wilt, take a photo of the leaves and bark. Email photos and the location of the tree to the [for-esthealth@dec.ny.gov](mailto:for-esthealth@dec.ny.gov) or call the DEC Forest Health information line at 1-866-640-0652. <http://dec.ny.gov/nature/forests-trees/forest-health/oak-wilt>



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