

# MSU Extension Conservation Connections

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## Worried about oak wilt?

Remember the no-prune dates of April 15 – July 15 to reduce the chance of oak wilt infection. Posted on March 30, 2018 by Monique Sakalidis, Michigan State University, Department of Forestry.

For more information contact 517-432-0825 or [sakalidi@msu.edu](mailto:sakalidi@msu.edu)

**Species** name *Bretziella fagacearum* (used to be known as *Ceratocystis fagacearum*) is a fungal pathogen that causes the disease oak wilt. How did oak wilt come to the United States and how long has it been here?

Oak wilt was first recognized as an important disease in 1944 in Wisconsin, where in localized areas, over half the oaks had been killed. The fungal pathogen is thought to be native to the Eastern U.S. Difficulties in identifying the fungus led to a delay in recognizing the exact extent of its impact until the 1980s. More recent evidence suggests oak wilt is an exotic disease that arrived in the U.S. in the early 1900s. The fungus has not been reported in any other country other than the U.S., so its origin remains unknown.

In Michigan, it was first reported in the 1970s. Extent of range In the U.S., oak wilt has been confirmed in 24 states, including 829 counties. The Michigan Department of Natural Resources has confirmed oak wilt in 56 Michigan counties. Oaks comprise about 10 percent of the forest in Michigan and oak wilt has the potential to impact the 149 million red oak trees across 3.9 million acres of Michigan forest land (private, state, local government and federal ownership).

**Why is oak wilt a problem?** Oak wilt is a serious disease of oak trees that mainly affects red oaks. The disease also affects white oaks, but because they are somewhat more resistant (due to their better ability of compartmentalizing the fungus whilst maintaining a functioning water transport system), the disease progresses more slowly. Activities that result in tree wounding such as pruning, tree climbing spikes, nailing signs on trees, hanging lanterns on trees, tree barking and storm damage during the warmer months of the year can result in more new tree infections. Oak wilt causes devastating ecosystem damage and is also an aesthetic blight across the landscape.

To read the complete article click on: [http://msue.anr.msu.edu/news/worried\\_about\\_oak\\_wilt](http://msue.anr.msu.edu/news/worried_about_oak_wilt)