

Treeways

2025 2

Oak Issues 2025

Oak tree insect and disease issues in our city are a significant threat. Most people have heard of **oak wilt** and oak wilt is a killer of mature oak trees. The disease may be transmitted by insects or can move through root grafts between trees of the same species from a diseased oak tree to a healthy oak tree. Red oaks and pin oaks are the most dramatically affected and when noticeably infected with oak wilt, both red and pin oak trees will likely die within a matter of weeks. **White oak, swamp white oak and bur oak can be infected with oak wilt though these species may be successfully treated and recover.** There is much more to be said about oak wilt so if you have more questions, please contact your Certified Arborist professional or your City Forester at 612-803-9033.

Two other deadly oak issues are prevalent here and those are **two-line chestnut borer (beetle)** and **armillaria root rot (fungus)**. Healthy oaks do not often have problems with either chestnut borer or armillaria as they are able to fend off attacks by these insects or this disease. **The key word here is healthy.** Many trees in our common forest were significantly stressed due to three consecutive summers of drought 2021-23 and are therefore more susceptible to either or both these organisms. Our wetter summer during 2024 was a relief for our woodlands but the trees are not back to normal yet. A “normal” rain summer 2025 would be a great help.

When two-line chestnut borer attacks a mature oak tree it usually becomes visible in the upper canopy of the tree when it causes a large branch or two to die back. At this point chestnut borer is probably treatable with systemic insecticide plus supplemental watering if drought conditions occur. The two-line chestnut borer beetle leaves evidence in the form of a rather large oval shaped exit hole.

Armillaria root rot is a more subtle pathogen that is normally found growing as a saprophyte (non-disease organism) in the soil of many forests. It does not always live as a pathogen, but it will attack mature trees when they are significantly stressed by environment, damage, insects or disease. Oaks, ash, and other trees may be attacked by armillaria fungus and the defining sign of armillaria attack is the presence of black fungal strings under tree bark that is shed from the dying tree. A common name for armillaria fungus is shoestring fungus. There is no treatment for armillaria root rot and the best prevention is maintaining healthy growing conditions for your trees.

May we all enjoy a more normal rainfall pattern for 2025.

Jim Naves
City Forester