



Oak Wilt Awareness Campaign and Related Industry Activity in Michigan

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An awareness campaign for Oak Wilt (OW) has launched and we need your participation! Oak Wilt (*Bretziella fagacearum*) continues to amplify and spread through Michigan each year. It's recognized that new infections often result from people's unknowing actions, thus this campaign is designed to increase Oak Wilt awareness. Everyone, including *all* Green Industry professionals are encouraged to use this electronically-based effort to share the message: "May is Oak Wilt Awareness Month." We encourage use of the icon shown here in emails, newsletters, on proposals, invoices, websites, social media platforms, and any other means of sharing this graphic message. Download the icon for your desired applications at MichiganOakWilt.org. *Let's get the word out!*



New Oak Wilt infections are initiated when oaks with a fresh wound are visited by spore-carrying beetles, particularly in the spring and early summer. More Oak Wilt infections mean more spores, and this equates to more disease pressure on healthy oak trees. To aid in general understanding of the prevalence of Oak Wilt in Michigan, Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) administers an interactive map called the *Oak Wilt Viewer*. The *Oak Wilt Viewer* is under-representative of infection levels occurring in Michigan, yet is insightful. The *Oak Wilt Viewer* can be accessed from the MichiganOakWilt.org Home page.

Anyone can report a possible Oak Wilt infection on this interactive map. Confirmation of Oak Wilt infection requires the presence of spore mats/pressure pads, or a positive lab analysis. On the *Oak Wilt Viewer*, if available, a photograph of the spore mats/pressure pads, and/or copy of positive Oak Wilt lab results can be uploaded to substantiate the report. MDNR staff verify the data and the infection points are then posted as red circles onto the map. Please, if you have worked with a positive Oak Wilt site, post the information to help update and improve the *Oak Wilt Viewer's* usefulness.

As referenced above, **MichiganOakWilt.org** is a resource tool for professionals and the public. This website offers oak tree identification tools, an Oak Wilt Risk Meter, webinars, articles, links to research papers, *Oak Wilt Viewer* map, list of Oak Wilt Qualified Specialists, and information about the members, the mission and vision. The site represents several stakeholders impacted by Oak Wilt, collectively known as the **Oak Wilt Coalition**. The OW Coalition's mission is:

"To facilitate collaboration among academia, government, industry, and non-profits to reduce the effects of Oak Wilt on the citizens and natural resources of Michigan."

The OW Coalition is led by ISA Michigan (formerly Arboriculture Society of Michigan (ASM)) and has been supportive of several statewide initiatives. Accomplishments of the OW Coalition include:

- Research in Michigan
- Public and professional education
- Development of the Oak Wilt Risk Meter
- Support grant education from Partners
- Website MichiganOakWilt.org
- Development of the Oak Wilt Qualified Specialist Program for professionals
- Engagement with Legislators
- Oak Wilt Awareness Campaign

 MichiganOakWilt.org

There is current Michigan legislative activity on Oak Wilt. In August 2019, **House Bill 4827 Oak Wilt Control** was introduced by Representative Terry Sabo, District 92, and referred to the Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Committee. The OW Coalition is seeking industry input on this House Bill. Please connect to HB 4827 at the link below, review and provide your comments on MichiganOakWilt.org at 'Contact Us', or send comments directly to Representative Terry Sabo. Thank you for this much needed industry review and input.

<http://legislature.mi.gov/doc.aspx?2019-HB-4827>

Due to many nuances and challenges presented by Oak Wilt, the need for technically trained Oak Wilt professionals is evident as disease levels continue to escalate in Michigan. Developing a pool of technically trained Oak Wilt qualified specialists provides assistance to the public, supports Oak Wilt prevention, identification, and ensures more successful Oak Wilt management efforts. To satisfy this need, an Oak Wilt Qualification training program was developed and initiated in Fall of 2017. This two-day technical training involves classroom and field work, culminating in an assessment of understanding via a closed-book exam. A person must be an ISA Certified Arborist, Certified/Registered Forester or hold comparable education plus work experience to register for the course. Oak Wilt Qualified Specialists are

listed on the MichiganOakWilt.org website. Barring any changes due to COVID-19, the next OW Qualification course is scheduled for August 19-20, 2020 at Kensington Metro Park. Watch for registration information on the MichiganOakWilt.org and ISA Michigan websites.

One of the most effective Oak Wilt containment treatments is installation of 5-foot deep trench lines, which disrupt root grafts and separate infected oaks from healthy oaks. To confirm access and availability to the most efficient and least disruptive equipment for the task – the Ditch Witch RT125 + 5-foot vibratory plow blade - ISA Michigan developed the Collaborative OW Trench Line Program. Launched in 2019, and due to the program's success, it will be repeated mid-October – mid-November, 2020. To have Oak Wilt-affected sites treated through the ISA Michigan/Ditch Witch Oak Wilt Trench Line Program requires scheduling prior to October 1st. This fee-based service is open to all interested parties. Watch for additional information at the ISA Michigan website: <https://www.asm-isa.org>.

Michigan is now in the Highest Risk Period for Oak Wilt infections! Please use the "May is Oak Wilt Awareness Month" icon to elevate the awareness of this devastating disease! While some campaign efforts were thwarted by the coronavirus, this electronically-based message can be shared by everyone. Don't forget to use the icon in newsletters, email signatures,

Oak Wilt Awareness Campaign!

Share this graphic

MAY *is*
OakWilt
AWARENESS
MONTH



To prevent oak wilt, there's a great need to elevate awareness!

-  Use graphic in emails, newsletters, invoices;
-  Display graphic on proposals, websites, social media!
-  Download graphic from the following websites:

- www.MichiganOakWilt.org
- www.asm-isa.org

 MichiganOakWilt.org



The installation of 5-foot deep trench lines, which disrupt root grafts and separate infected oaks from healthy oaks. Photo credit: Corey Parshall

proposals, invoices, designs, websites, and social media platforms. Download the icon at MichiganOakWilt.org and learn about preventing Oak Wilt while at the site!

Author Julie Stachecki, ISA Certified Arborist, TRAQ, MI OW Qualified, ISA Michigan-Past President, serves on the Oak Wilt Coalition - Oak Wilt Awareness Campaign sub-committee with Ruth Marcy, MSUE Master Gardener Oak Wilt Outreach Coordinator, Kevin Sayers, MDNR Urban & Community Forestry, and Diane Banks, Executive Director Michigan Green Industry Association.

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