

## Tree Disease

By: Melinda Sperl

The Houston area lost a lot of trees in the 2011 drought and we are now noticing an influx of insects and disease on our trees. Just like with your own health, early diagnosis of a tree's health can make the difference between saving the tree and cutting it down. Remember trees can take up to 5 years to show damage, so looking for signs of stress early can make a huge difference to the life of your tree.

It is also very important to cut into your trees only when the sap is not flowing, which means winter. If you cut branches at this time of year, you spread disease when the sap flows from one branch to another. In our climate, November through January is probably the best time to cut branches.

Oak trees have some specific diseases and I have listed a few examples that you can look for. Remember these are only examples and an Arborist is your best friend in these circumstances. If you need a referral we would be happy to help you with this.

- Anthracnose is a fungus causing irregular brown spots or blotches. Early spring will show a distortion to the leaves and a papery texture, which change later in the year to dark pimple-like formations.
- Spot Anthracnose – Small spots seen only on the foliage of Red Oaks. Blackish-brown spots on the upper surface of the leaf. First visibility is from June to mid-August. Leaves will fall off the tree but this is usually just a visible disease and not damaging to the tree. Discourage fertilizer use around the tree area while the tree is recovering.
- Oak Decline – A vascular disease with indications showing over many years. First signs are the top of the tree thinning and dieback generally increasing each year. As dieback increases each year sucker growth increases on lower limbs as the tree tries to recover its growth on lower limbs. A tree can take 5-10 years to die depending on its size.

These are just a few of the problems you may notice on your trees. If you think you have a problem with your tree it is important that you do not wait to deal with it. You don't want to find out you had a problem in the next storm with a tree falling in your yard. Correcting the problem early is your best solution.

Happy Gardening!

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