

Sudden Oak Death Starting to Invade East Bay Area

Submitted by Expert Tree Service, Orinda



Tree located at Sleepy Hollow Lane, Orinda Photo Expert Tree Service

Sudden Oak Death (SOD) is spreading through the east bay area resulting in the dieback of several tree species including tanoak trees and other oaks, including coast live oaks and California black oaks.

Homeowners need to be aware of this disease caused by *Phytophthora ramorum*, a plant pathogen that was first discovered in Europe in 1995, and spread to the United States (Santa Cruz County) in 2001. Today, the disease has reached 14 California counties, from Monterey to Humboldt and continues to spread. Two counties that are highly infected include Santa Cruz and Marin (specifically, Mt. Tamalpais) according to the Department of Natural Resources.

Sudden Oak Death has killed more than one million trees to date, and at least another million are currently infected. Researchers at University of California-Berkeley estimate that 20 percent of the live oaks in the area will perish from SOD if left untreated.

“The good news is there are measures one can take to protect your trees from SOD,” says Brian Gates, owner of Expert Tree Service. “Agri-Fos® is a non-toxic treatment to protect trees from getting infected or suppress the disease from

progressing in some hosts. Currently, it is the only treatment approved by the State of California to protect oaks and tanoaks against SOD.”

The compound, Agri-Fos®, is best used as a preventative measure and is not considered a cure for Sudden Oak Death. The treatment does prevent infection of SOD in healthy oak trees, plus it can suppress the disease in very early stages of progression. After the first treatment is injected directly or sprayed on the trunk with a mixture of Pentra-Bark®, a second application is recommended six months later, followed by yearly treatments.

“Unfortunately, there is no cure for Sudden Oak Death once it has reached advanced, noticeable stages,” says Gates. “It is imperative to treat oaks as a preventative measure. I highly recommend homeowners in our area contact a certified arborist to evaluate the risk of SOD.”

Visit California Oak Mortality Task Force’s website, www.suddenoakdeath.org to learn about SOD, or call Expert Tree Service at 925-254-8733 for a complimentary SOD consultation of your property.



Classic example of non-oak species infection

Frequently Questions and Answers for Homeowners About Sudden Oak Death



Q *How Can I Tell If My Oak Tree Has Sudden Oak Death?*

A On oaks and tanoaks, trunk cankers are formed on stems. Black or reddish ooze sometimes bleeds from the cankers, staining the oak’s bark. Cankered trees usually survive a few years, but once crown dieback begins, leaves usually turn green to yellow to brown within weeks. Since the bleeding ooze is hard to see once it is dried or washed off from rain, it is difficult for many homeowners to detect SOD.

Q *How Can Sudden Oak Death Be Treated?*

A The phosphate compound, Agri-Fos®, is the only preventive treatment approved by the State for use against *Phytophthora ramorum* infections on oaks and tanoaks. It is not a cure, but a preventative measure with healthy trees. There is no treatment for trees showing advanced signs of SOD. This treatment protects trees from getting infected and suppresses SOD in very early infections. It takes between three to six weeks for the material to fully assimilate and start warding off the pathogen.

Q *Will my oak tree die if it has Sudden Oak Death?*

A Tanoaks seem to have a higher probability of dying of SOD over live oaks. Generally, most tanoaks die within one to two years after becoming infected while live oaks last for another three to four years.

Q *When landscaping, what types of oaks should I consider?*

A Some native oaks (white oak group) are most resistant to SOD. Small live oaks are less susceptible to SOD versus larger trees if provided the proper preventative protection when planted. Compliments of Expert Tree Service in Orinda, CA