

Frequently Asked Questions About Laurel Wilt Disease

Q. What causes laurel wilt disease?

A. Laurel wilt disease is caused by a fungus, which is carried by the redbay ambrosia beetle. When a beetle carrying the fungus bores into a tree, the fungus spreads and begins digesting the wood, disrupting the flow of water and nutrients. Within six months after a tree is infected, it wilts and dies.

Q. Is the disease in Ventura County?

A. Not yet, but it is spreading rapidly throughout the United States. It was first detected in May 2002 near Savannah, Georgia. By 2008, it had spread along the coast of South Carolina, Georgia and Florida. It is currently in the avocado orchards around Miami.

Q. Is there a cure or treatment?

A. No. Infected trees must be cut down and burned. It burning is not allowed, the tree must be cut down, chipped and left to decompose in place. Moving any part of an infected tree, even if it has been chipped, can spread the fungus.

Q. How is it spread?

A. Like many other invasive pest-disease complexes, laurel wilt and the redbay ambrosia beetle are being moved around the country by humans. They can be spread in wooden packing materials such as shipping crates, as well as potted plants, firewood, logs and wood chips.

Q. Does it affect other trees?

A. Yes. Laurel wilt disease affects all plant species in the family *Lauraceae*, which includes avocados, California bay, and about 2,000 other species of woody shrubs and trees.

Q. Where did it originate?

A. The redbay ambrosia beetle is native to Asia and is the 12th new species of ambrosia beetle known to have been introduced unintentionally into the United States since 1990. The associated fungus is in the same class of fungi as those that cause Dutch elm disease.

Q. What is being done to stop it?

A. There are no proven management strategies for preventing the development of laurel wilt disease. Early removal of infested trees and limiting movement of infested wood may help slow the spread. Field trials evaluating the effectiveness of certain pesticides are being conducted in Florida and Georgia.

Q. What can I do?

A. Report any suspicious trees to the Agricultural Commissioner's Office at (805) 933-2926, or the California Department of Food and Agriculture at 1-800-491-1899. Don't bring wood or wood products into Ventura County from areas known to be infested. Don't purchase or obtain native *Lauraceae* plants or avocado trees from an area known to have the pest and disease.