

FOREST STEWARDSHIP BRIEFINGS

Timber ◇ Wildlife ◇ Water ◇ Soil ◇ Best Management Practices ◇ Forest Health ◇ Recreation ◇ Aesthetics

IMPACTING FUTURE LAND STEWARDS

For more information:

- <http://www.texasforestry.org/educators/forest-awareness-tours/>
- <http://www.texasforestry.org/educators/teachers-conservation-institute/>
- <http://www.texasforestry.org/educators/project-learning-tree>

Part of the Texas A&M Forest Service (TFS) Water Resources Program mission is to educate those in the forest sector and the public about protecting soil and water resources using forestry Best Management Practices (BMPs), as well as the overall importance of forests to water resources.

One aspect of this mission involves educators and students. Teaching them about protecting water quality and preventing soil erosion, and tying these into good forest management practices, helps them to see the forest industry in a different light. They can see that an often misunderstood industry does take the environment into consideration and can protect water and soil during its operations. Along with this, they realize how important forests are to our water supplies.

Each year, the TFS Water Resources Program leads forestry labs in the field for Stephen F. Austin State University and Texas A&M University students, teaching them on-site about forestry BMPs, their implementation, and their effectiveness.

For many years, TFS has been conducting “Forest Awareness Tours” in many areas of East Texas where elementary, middle, and high school students come outside in forested settings to learn about all aspects of the forest. Water Resources personnel participate in many of these, using hands-on activities on water quality testing and stressing the importance of riparian areas and how forests keep water clean.

TFS also conducts “Walk in the Forest for Teachers,” where teachers and student teachers come to a wooded setting and

learn about all aspects of the forest through activities from the environmental education program Project Learning Tree.

Texas Forestry Association, the trade organization for the forest industry in Texas, sponsors the Teacher’s Conservation Institute (TCI) every summer, and TFS is heavily involved. During the first level workshop, educators of many different disciplines are shown the full circle of how we get the wood products we use every day, from the seedling to the lumber and other product mills, and everything in between. They are taken to logging sites and see first-hand how harvesting operations are conducted.

During the TCI Phase II sessions, attendees are exposed to BMPs; their rate of implementation on industrial, public, and private tracts; and their effectiveness in protecting water quality and soil. They also do hands-on activities such as stream and lake water testing, sampling aquatic organisms to look for indicators of good water quality, and other water-related topics and local issues. This workshop also includes session that cover forest management, wildlife, and cultural heritage.

In 2012, the first TCI Phase III workshop was conducted. The emphasis of this week-long camp was water, exposing the educators to more topics involving water, its use, and conservation.

Through the education of teachers and students, showing the science behind what is done in the forestry community, we can continue to have well-informed stewards, now and in the future.

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DEADLY OAK WILT DISEASE

from Texas A&M Forest Service website

For more information:

- <http://tfsweb.tamu.edu/main/popup.aspx?id=17545>
- <http://texasforestservicetamu.edu/main/article.aspx?id=1260>
- <http://texasoakwilt.org/>

The mighty Central Texas oak trees that help shade homes and beautify neighborhoods are falling prey to an incurable and deadly disease.

Oak wilt is a fungal disease that has caused tree deaths in 74 Texas counties.

Trees infected with oak wilt can spread the disease to surrounding oaks via their interconnected root systems. When that happens, the only way to stop further spread is by digging trenches to break the root connections.

The deadly disease also can be spread by insects, which strike primarily from February through June. Sap-feeding beetles are attracted to the sweet-smelling spore mats produced by infected red oaks. The disease is spread when those insects fly off to feed on a healthy red oak or a live oak with a fresh wound.

Texas A&M Forest Service Forester Eric Beckers said oak wilt is primarily seen in the central part of the state but confirmed

cases of the disease have been reported in the Texas Panhandle and eastern areas.

“We’re talking about trees that have been in the landscape for a century or more. We don’t replace those trees overnight,” Beckers said, adding that the death of such majestic trees can lead to drops in property values. “Preventing oak wilt is the key.”

A wound is created any time bark is removed and wood is exposed, Beckers said. That can happen with the simplest of tasks — clearing brush, pruning limbs, or even pushing a lawn mower over a bare tree root. That bare wood produces sap, which attracts the sap-feeding beetles.

Beckers stressed how important it is to:

- Avoid pruning and wounding oaks in the spring.
- Immediately paint wounds on oak trees no matter the time of year
- Destroy diseased red oaks by burning or burying them.
- Do not transport or buy unseasoned firewood.

TREE TIPS - ASSESSING STORM DAMAGE

The weather patterns the last several weeks have produced many storms across Texas, some of them strong enough to do damage to property and trees.

In the aftermath of a storm, the initial impulse of property owners is generally along the lines of “Let’s get this mess cleaned up.” But hasty decisions can often result in removing trees that could have been saved. Doing the right things after trees have been damaged can make the difference between giving your trees a good chance of survival and losing them unnecessarily.

Storms often leave trees looking bare and deflated. But sometimes looks can be deceiving. Trees have an uncanny ability to

recover from storm damage.

The first step is simply to assess the damage. Before you write your tree off, evaluate it. The first link in the sidebar to the left will take you to a list of questions to ask yourself before determining the fate of your damaged tree. Going through these questions can help you decide what category your tree falls into - Is it a keeper? Should you wait and see if it will recover? Or is it already time to say goodbye?

Texas A&M Forest Service urges home and property owners to follow a few simple rules in administering tree “first aid” after a storm. The second link to the left will take you to information and illustrations to help you do this properly.

from Texas A&M Forest Service website

For more information:

- <http://texasforestservicetamu.edu/main/popup.aspx?id=1331>
- <http://texasforestservicetamu.edu/main/popup.aspx?id=1335>

POTENTIAL FOX RABIES OUTBREAK

Officials with several state agencies are asking for the public's help in monitoring a suspected outbreak of a strain of fox rabies not found in West Central Texas since 2009. Agencies directly involved with the rabies surveillance testing for the area are the Texas Department of State Health Services and the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service's Texas Wildlife Services Program.

Vance Christie, AgriLife Extension agent in McCulloch County, said efforts started May 28 and are currently being focused in McCulloch, Concho, Menard and Mason counties, but that Brown, Coleman, Gillespie, Kimble, Llano, Mills, Runnels, San Saba, Schleicher, Sutton and Tom Green will ultimately be part of the overall surveillance effort to keep the deadly virus from spreading.

"On May 6, we had a confirmed case of Texas fox rabies southwest of Melvin on the McCulloch/Concho county line," Christie said. "This strain is different from the typical skunk variant and was thought to be eradicated from the area for the past six years. So far, this has been the one isolated case and was found in a cow.

"The main focus is not to cause a panic in the immediate area but rather to let landowners and homeowners understand the

situation," he said. "We need the public's help to report any encounters they have with wildlife or strange-acting domestic animals or livestock. It is important that the public knows that the state will pick up any of the cost associated with testing of the animals. But I want to stress that this is not the time for the 'Old Three Ss,' of shoot, shovel, and shut-up to avoid any future problems. Doing so could actually prolong the problem."

Christie said Wildlife Services is currently dropping oral rabies vaccine via helicopter in the four main counties. Animals eat the bait and are inoculated against rabies. As the number of vaccinated animals increases, the disease decreases and lessens the risk of human or animal exposure to rabies.

According to Christie, you should be suspicious that an animal is carrying rabies if it is a target species and is aggressive, unafraid, or acting unusual. Target species include fox, bobcats, raccoons, coyotes, and free ranging cats and dogs."

If a suspect animal is found in the target counties, Christie advises contacting the appropriate personnel such as animal control, sheriff's department, county trapper, or a Texas Parks and Wildlife Department game warden.

by Steve Byrns, Communications Specialist, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, San Angelo, TX

For more information:

- <http://today.agrilife.org/2013/06/03/public-help-sought-in-stemming-potential-fox-rabies-outbreak/>
- <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/idcu/disease/rabies/>

FIRE PREDICTIVE SERVICES

Following the 1998 fire seasons, Texas A&M Forest Service (TFS) established the Predictive Services Department as a permanently staffed unit to provide short and long-term forecasts and analyses. The program produces information and products that are utilized on the national, state, and local level by firefighters, elected officials, and public administrators.

Most of the products (daily fire danger, drought indices, fuel dryness) have been developed as automated, online, and publicly available resources through a part-

nership with the TAMU AgriLife Spatial Sciences Laboratory.

TFS continually analyzes current and predicted weather conditions, wildfire occurrence, and the presence and availability of vegetative fuels throughout the year to maintain a continual assessment of wildfire risk at the state, regional, and local level. Utilizing this information, agency staff develop daily and seasonal forecasts to assist the state and local government entities in preparing for and responding to periods of elevated fire danger.

from Texas A&M Forest Service website

For more information:

- <http://texasforests.tamu.edu/main/article.aspx?id=1991>
- <http://ticc.tamu.edu/PredictiveServices/predictiveservices.htm>

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FAMOUS TREES OF TEXAS

Two trees rich in Lone Star State history have been added to the Famous Trees of Texas registry. A large evergreen Anacua identified during the restoration of the Espiritu Santo church at the Goliad Historic Site near San Antonio, and a towering bald cypress in McKinney Falls State Park known as "Old Baldy," join the elite group.

Texas A&M Forest Service oversees the Famous Trees of Texas registry, which recognizes trees that have witnessed exciting periods and events in Texas history. The original 81 Famous Trees of Texas were memorialized in a book published by TFS in the 1970s and 1980s. Only 57 of those are still alive. The book, "Famous Trees of Texas," is now presented in an online format with updates to reflect the status of the trees.

Texas A&M Forest Service seeks to augment this distinguished group through nominations of additional Famous Trees. The agency is seeking nominations to bring the total number of Famous Trees to 100 by 2015, the 100th anniversary of TFS. The general public can make nominations through the website that will be reviewed by a steering committee. For additional information, visit <http://famoustreesoftexas.tamu.edu> or contact: Gretchen Riley, TFS, at griley@tfs.tamu.edu.



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