

*Article Intended for Lake Associations' Newsletters in Vilas, Lincoln, and Oneida counties.  
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## Deadly Oak Wilt First Appears on Developed Lakeshores in Northern Wisconsin

The DNR detected Oak Wilt for the first time last year in Vilas, Lincoln and Sawyer counties. Oneida County was found to have this fatal fungal tree disease for the first time in 2010. In each case the infected tree was growing on a lakeshore or river edge property, and the affected property was surrounded by hundreds of seasonal homes.

It is noteworthy that none of these counties in northern Wisconsin has an Oak Wilt find in an undeveloped forested area (see map below). The reason for this is not because foresters and forest disease experts are not actively surveying for this disease, but rather, it is because seasonal homeowners, developers, and ornamental tree care workers are guilty of spreading this damaging disease. Eventually this disease will march into undeveloped forests, as it has in southern and central Wisconsin.

So what should lakeshore property owners do about Oak Wilt? Besides learning about what [infected oaks look like](#) (see Figures 2 and 3), they need to know that humans can easily prevent this disease from entering an area. After all, the beetle that carries this disease only flies up to a quarter mile from the originally infested firewood pile or tree, and it rarely flies that far. By simply not transporting fresh oak firewood (less than 2 years old) from an infested area to a clean area, people can prevent Oak Wilt. Not wounding oaks in any way between April and July is also an important strategy to avoid oak wilt. Lastly if oaks are damaged in any way from April through October, those wounds should be cut clean and the cut surface painted with a latex-based paint to prevent disease transfer.

For as long as communities, property owners, developers, and tree care professionals ignore the easy strategies to prevent oak wilt, the disease will continue to spread into clean areas of Wisconsin, decreasing property values and killing beautiful oaks. Please prevent oak wilt and report suspect infected oak trees to a professional forester or Extension agent. Educate your neighbors, community leaders, property developers, and tree care professionals about the easy ways to prevent oak wilt.

Additional information about oak wilt can be found online using the keyword "[oak wilt](#)" at [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov).

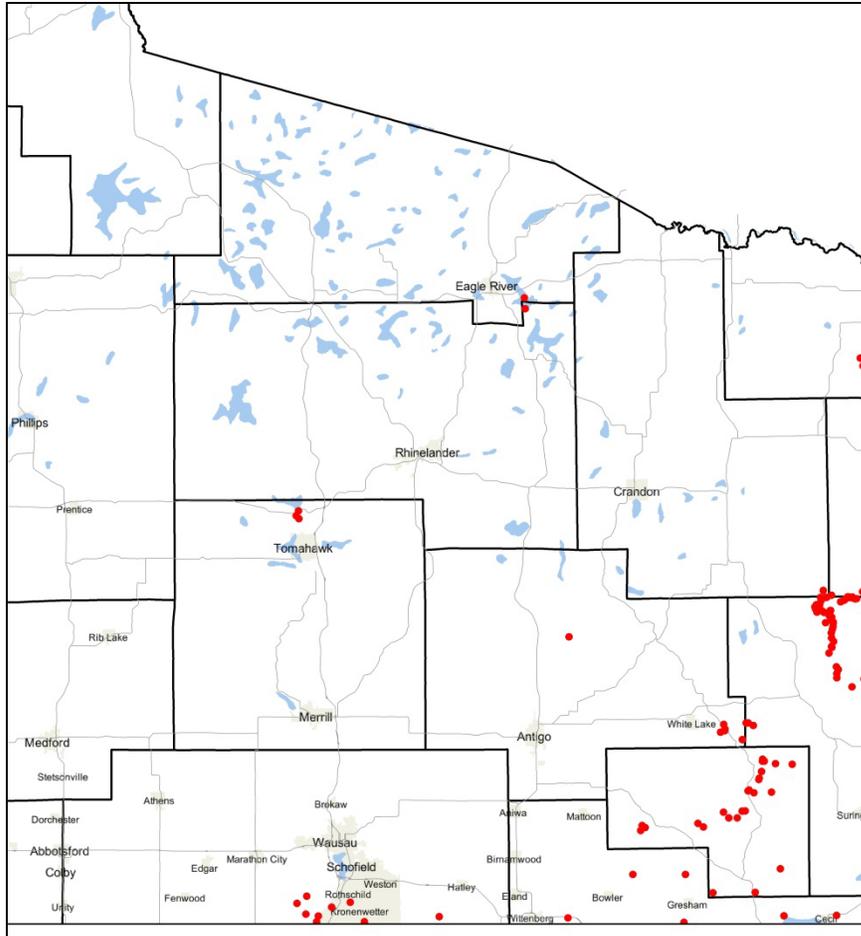


Figure 1. Red dots represent confirmed or suspected Oak Wilt cases in North-central Wisconsin. Only the northwestern edge of infestation is shown for Menominee County. The closest confirmed oak wilt in Michigan's U.P. is in southeastern Iron County (MI), north of Florence County (WI).



**Figure 2. An oak tree with oak wilt at the end of August. This tree was perfectly healthy in May. Now it is dead. Other diseases, insects, and severe drought can kill oaks, but none will kill a healthy oak in only a few months.**



**Figure 3. Northern Red Oaks with oak wilt oftentimes shed their leaves quickly starting in mid to late June (left). Fallen leaves will be totally green or bronze, or they will have brown tips (right).**