

Oak Wilt or Twolined Chestnut Borer?

This summer, six beautiful, old, red oak trees died on Goat Island (aka "Greatest Of All Time"). Concerned that it was oak wilt – particularly since other trees have been dying on the Scientific and Natural Resources (SNA) mainland, we contacted the DNR. You may recall that we discussed oak wilt at our July association meeting and learned it had been identified in our general area of the state. I want to share the results of our discussions with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

Upon contacting the DNR, Tim Stai, a DNR Forest Specialist ((320)232-1088; Timothy.Stai@state.mn.us), came to the island and inspected several trees. Tim diagnosed the issue not as oak wilt but rather twolined chestnut borer, a small black beetle that can infest chestnut and oak trees. Although oak trees are usually resistant, the borer will kill stressed oak trees. Tim explained that the population of the twolined chestnut borers has exploded over the recent years due to substantial rain (2019-2020) followed by the severe drought (2021) with a possibility of even further beetle population increases in the next two to four years. The twolined chestnut borer has already damaged stressed oak forest systems, which would otherwise be resistant to that insect. Tim stressed that the most important action is to preserve the remaining oak trees by watering them diligently in the spring during leaf-out as well as the summer, if the drought continues, in order to enable them to be more naturally resistant to the twolined chestnut borer. In addition to implementing Tim's suggestion, a professional arborist can treat surviving trees in the spring. The DNR advises that the dead and dying oak trees be removed only during winter when the ground is frozen and tree removal will not stress the other oak trees. It is advised to anyone who has oaks on their property to diligently water them next spring and going forward until we are clearly beyond current drought conditions. If you observe your oaks losing leaves in the spring or summer, you should immediately contact Tim Stai so he can determine the cause and recommend next steps. There is no charge for the DNR visit, their diagnosis and advice is superb, and, unlike other tree experts, they have no financial incentive in their findings. If the DNR confirms oak wilt (not twolined chestnut borer) on a property, Morrison County Soil and Water Conservation District has grant money available for the next two years to treat confirmed oak wilt pockets at no cost to the landowner. Additional information and contacts:

https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/treecare/forest_health/tlcb/management.html

<https://extension.umn.edu/tree-and-shrub-insects/metallic-wood-boring-beetles>

Also, visit our website (<https://fishtraplake.com>) to view additional information from the DNR.