

City of Austin Adopts New Oak Wilt Management Strategy

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Austin's Urban Forest Health Program increases urban forest resilience through a community centered approach to tree health. One threat to tree health is oak wilt, an often-fatal fungal disease that infects oak species throughout Texas. The City of Austin's oak wilt program has adapted to leverage new opportunities including:

- *Growth in private sector capacity:* Certified Arborists and Registered Consulting Arborists have increased in number and expertise in response to the demand for diagnosis and management of tree diseases.
- *Public information and access:* Public information has become prolific and people are increasingly accustomed to accessing online content such as flood risk, wildfire potential, and crime statistics.
- *Neighborhood communication:* Neighborhoods are well connected through newsletters, email, and social media. Leveraging these communication channels emphasizes the Urban Forest Health Program's underlying message that a community approach to forest health is the best way to manage oak wilt and increase neighborhood tree resilience.

In Austin we have shifted the focus away from lot level to the neighborhood and community scale, leaving diagnosis and management to private sector arborists. We are piloting a feedback tool that allows Certified Arborists to submit the location of oak wilt symptomatic trees, and recommend public trees for preventive treatment. These data, coupled with City of Austin oak wilt observations contribute to an online, interactive map that increases public awareness about the potential for oak wilt throughout Austin, and increases the City's capacity to proactively treat significant public trees. The Forest Health Program provides neighborhood presentations and community-wide messages that focus on oak wilt and other forest health topics including the importance of working with Certified Arborists. By exploring new technologies, increasing public-private partnerships, and offering diverse education to the public we are proactively managing the forest, not the trees.

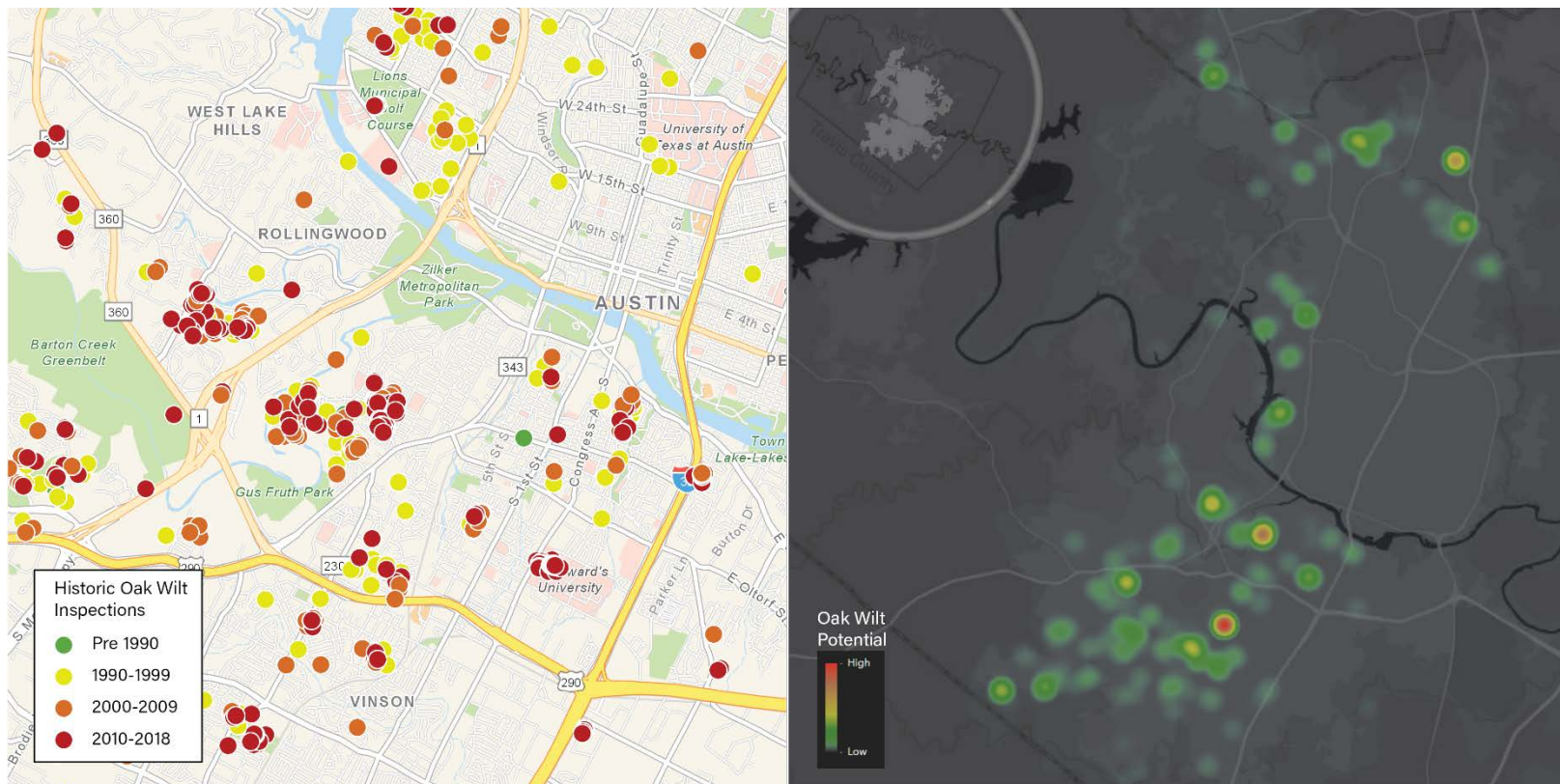
To interact with the oak wilt map visit: <http://www.austintexas.gov/page/oak-wilt-suppression>

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To learn more about oak wilt visit: <https://texasoakwilt.org/>

To find an Oak Wilt Qualified Arborist visit: <https://texasoakwilt.org/vendors/>

On the left is oak wilt inspection data that was not publicly available; on the right is the inspection data now available as a public, interactive map. GIS analysis and photos: Alan Halter, GISP



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