

Q: The leaves on my blue oaks are turning brown, curling and falling off. The trees are almost bare. Do my trees have Sudden Oak Death?

A: Watching trees that usually stay green till fall drop their leaves in mid-summer is distressing, but not indicative of 'Sudden Oak Death.' The symptoms you are describing have been reported throughout much of Northern California on California black oak (*Quercus kelloggii*) and blue oak (*Q. douglasii*). It is important to know that as of now blue oaks and valley oaks (*Q. lobata*) have not been found to host the *Phytophthora ramorum* organism that causes Sudden Oak Death. The most likely causes are fungi, with the two most common including Septoria leaf blight (*Septoria quercicola*) and oak anthracnose (*Apiognomonia errabuna*).

The cool, wet, late spring we had this year provided great conditions for the spread of fungal diseases. The moist conditions kept the young leaves vulnerable for a longer period of time to the fungal infections. Although the trees may look defoliated and sad, they should be fine next year as long as the weather pattern doesn't repeat. There is no recommended fungicide that is effective on the trees once the infections have occurred. Fungicides work best as preventatives, but are rarely recommended for oaks. Your trees may re-leaf this fall, depending on their health.

For more information on oak management, check out the UC Integrated Hardwood Range Management Program website at: <http://danr.ucop.edu/ihrmp/>

The information on Sudden Oak Death changes rapidly. If you would like to keep up to date on current hosts and the spread of this disease, check out <http://www.suddenoakdeath.org/>, or call the Master Gardener's office in Contra Costa; (925) 646-6586.