Current research documents that more than 95% of the spread of oak wilt from tree to tree in live oak motts occurs underground via roots [Is this a Texas reference??add reference]. However, above-ground infection is the means by which new oak wilt centers originate. New infection centers begin when insects carrying oak wilt fungal spores visit fresh, open wounds on susceptible hosts (usually red oak or live oak trees). Wounding mechanisms can include wind, hail, vehicle damage, construction activity, squirrel activity, bird activity, or tree pruning. Some research (references? indicates that initiation of new oak wilt centers can be minimized by taking extra precautions when pruning oak trees, especially when climatic conditions are most conducive to both the production of oak wilt fungal mats on diseased trees and the movement of the insects that carry disease spores. In central Texas, these climatic conditions are most likely to occur during the spring.

Insects (primarily beetles of the family Nitidulidae) arebelieved to be the primary factor in spreading the disease above ground, and these insects are most common during the spring months. Pruning recommendations based on calendar dates (i.e., don't prune oaks between February 1 and June 30) are, at best, educated assumptions, because temperatures vary widely with seasons in Texas. It is inevitable that some trees may require care and pruning during "non-recommended" pruning times. For this reason, when oak pruning is done during these times, it should only be performed by people fully trained and experienced in proper pruning and oak wilt prevention techniques. These techniques include sanitizing tools between trees and properties, making proper pruning cuts, and immediately covering any wounds with a thin coating of low-toxicity wound or latex paint. If you are unsure about how to do this, you should consult a Texas Oak Wilt Certified arborist."

Edits recommended by Ron Billings, Texas Forest Service

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