

For the Homeowner

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Sudden Oak Death is most common in urban-wildland interface areas, so it presents many problems for homeowners. This page addresses the main concerns for homeowners, including diagnosing infected trees, disposing of contaminated material, and understanding treatment options for controlling this disease.

Homeowner's Guidelines

If you suspect your tree has been infected by *Phytophthora ramorum*, the pathogen which causes Sudden Oak Death, you will undoubtedly have questions about what to do. The Homeowner's Guide addresses how to confirm the presence of the pathogen on your property, how your trees will be affected if they are infected, secondary problems associated with *P. ramorum*, and preventive measures that can help you safeguard your trees.

Homeowners Guide

Questions addressed in the Homeowner's Guide include:

1. How can I confirm that my tree has Sudden Oak Death?
2. If my oak tree has SOD, what are the chances that it will die?
3. Are there treatments that will cure an infected oak tree or prevent the infection of a healthy one, and are there activities that should be avoided to prevent SOD?
4. When should an oak tree with Sudden Oak Death be removed?
5. Will removing a diseased oak tree prevent the disease from spreading to nearby healthy trees?

6. If I have my infected oak tree cut down, what should be done with the wood?
7. What should be planted to replace a tree killed by SOD?

Management Guidelines

The Management Guidelines describe best management practices for handling diseased material, and list mitigation measures to be taken in specific situations.

Management Guidelines

Disposal of Infested Material

Disposal of infested material in generally infested areas (Marin, Sonoma, and Santa Cruz Counties and Big Sur area of Monterey County)

Branches, twigs and leaves from California bay laurel, rhododendron and other host plants may harbor *P. ramorum*, even after they are removed from the plant. If infested plant debris (or infected live plants) are moved, they may inadvertently transfer the pathogen to uninfested areas. To minimize pathogen spread, ideally, infested material would be destroyed, usually done by burning. Unfortunately, *P. ramorum* has been present in many areas of Marin and Santa Cruz Counties for a decade or longer and eradication is not possible. Large scale burning is not permissible since it pollutes the air and may start wildfires.

The next best option is to leave material on site and use it for firewood. Composting also kills the pathogen, but the compost must heat up to high temperature (130 degrees F for two weeks), which may not be attained in a home compost that may not be composed of the proper mix of woody and green materials and turned regularly. Chipping and leaving the chips on site is also recommended in generally infested areas. Since inoculum levels are already thought to be high, the additional inoculum will not worsen the local disease conditions. However, chipping may not be acceptable to the individual for aesthetic or other reasons.

Since disposal of infested plant materials in areas with widespread infestations, is such a difficult problem, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, the USDA Forest Service and the California Oak Mortality Task Force Biomass Committee are working together on a utilization and collection program for *P. ramorum* infested materials. Called "Sodbusters" the project aims to run pilot projects for debris collection and utilization in Marin County in 2003. Programs for Santa Cruz are planned for future years. For more information on disposal see the [SODBusters](#) website or COMTF [Biomass Utilization Committee](#) page.

Disposal in areas where the pathogen is uncommon (all infested counties other than Marin, Santa Cruz, Sonoma Counties and the Big Sur area of Monterey County).

In Humboldt, Mendocino and many other coastal counties, *P. ramorum* is uncommon and the infested materials should be destroyed. Contact your local County Agricultural Commissioner or UCCE office (see [County Contacts](#)) for further information.

Regulatory Issues

Because *Phytophthora ramorum* may be spread through the movement of host materials, state and federal regulations are in place to control the potential spread of the pathogen to uninfested areas. Plants, plant parts, unprocessed wood and wood products, and other products made from affected hosts *may not be moved* from counties infested with Sudden Oak Death without authorization of the local County Agricultural Commissioner. To contact your county's Agricultural Commissioner, check the [County Contacts](#) page for name and phone number. For more information on current and pending regulations, quarantine text, links and other contact information for county, state, federal and international regulatory agencies, see [Regulations page](#).

SODBusters

The SODBusters project has begun to address the disposal and utilization of infested host material. For more information on this project, and to find out where to safely dispose of host material in your area, please see the SODBusters website www.ucfpl.ucop.edu/sodbusters

Pesticide Policy

The Task Force currently does not endorse the use of any pesticides to treat Sudden Oak Death (SOD). There is no known cure for the disease, and while potential treatments are being investigated, further results are needed before any pesticide treatments for the control of SOD can be recommended. For the full text of the Task Force's pesticide policy, click on: [COMTF Pesticide Policy](#)

Additional Items

Other related items that may be of interest to homeowners can be found on the [Regulations](#) and [FAQ](#) pages.