



## **SUDDEN OAK DEATH FAQs**

### **What is Sudden Oak Death?**

Sudden Oak Death (SOD) is a relatively new plant disease killing oak and tanoak trees and adversely affecting more than 100 other plants in California. The disease is caused by the pathogen *Phytophthora ramorum*, but was given the name Sudden Oak Death in the mid 1990s when the first reports came in of infected trees that changed rapidly in appearance from green and healthy-looking to brown and dead or dying in a matter of weeks.

### **Where has Sudden Oak Death been detected in the U.S.?**

There are currently 14 California counties known to have Sudden Oak Death in forestlands: Alameda, Contra Costa, Humboldt, Lake, Marin, Mendocino, Monterey, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Solano, and Sonoma. The pathogen has also been confirmed in forests of southwestern Oregon, in Curry County. Additionally, it has been detected in nurseries nationwide where it is subject to mandatory eradication.

### **What plants are affected?**

Currently there are 5 tree species that can be killed when they are infected with *Phytophthora ramorum*: tanoak, coast live oak, California black oak, Shreve's oak, and canyon live oak. In addition, a number of plants are affected on the foliage and twigs. In extreme cases of foliar and twig infection, some plants such as madrone and evergreen huckleberry can be killed by the dieback; however, most foliar hosts do not die from pathogen infection. For a current and comprehensive host list, go to the California Oak Mortality Task Force (COMTF) website at [www.suddenoakdeath.org](http://www.suddenoakdeath.org).

### **What are the impacts of this disease?**

Consequences of Sudden Oak Death may include: mortality of tanoak and oaks which can impair visual landscapes; changed species composition of forest and woodland ecosystems; decreased property values; increased risk of tree failure; impaired water quality due to increased soil erosion; reduced wildlife food and habitat resources; and increased risk of wildfires. The pathogen also adversely impacts nurseries and other affected industries due to direct losses of product, increased sanitation and treatment costs, loss of markets, and the like.

## **How does the pathogen spread?**

*Phytophthora ramorum* is a water mold that spreads locally through wind-blown rain and the flow of water. Longer distance movements are possible when infested soil or vegetation are moved from forests and through shipments of ornamental plants. You may help reduce this long-distance spread by cleaning your shoes, tires, equipment, and pet's paws before leaving an area known to have Sudden Oak Death, and carefully inspecting any nursery plants you buy for signs of disease.

## **Is there a treatment or cure?**

A phosphonate compound, Agri-Fos® is registered in California for use on oaks and tanoaks to prevent Sudden Oak Death. This treatment is only effective to PREVENT infections and is not a cure. Other cultural practices, such as pruning or removal of nearby foliar hosts, such as California bay laurel, may also reduce the risk of infection to susceptible oaks. The latest treatment information can be found on the COMTF website at [www.suddenoakdeath.org](http://www.suddenoakdeath.org).

## **What is the California Oak Mortality Task Force?**

The California Oak Mortality Task Force (COMTF) brings together public agencies, non-profit organizations, and private interests to address the issue of elevated levels of oak mortality in the state. The Task Force facilitates a comprehensive and unified approach for research, management, education, and public policy. It is a voluntary group made up of over 80 organizations and has more than 1,000 members. Find out how to become a COMTF member at [www.suddenoakdeath.org](http://www.suddenoakdeath.org).

## **What more can I do?**

At the COMTF website ([www.suddenoakdeath.org](http://www.suddenoakdeath.org)) you can:

- Familiarize yourself with symptoms and find out what plants are affected;
- Learn about *Phytophthora ramorum* state and federal quarantines, regulations, and best management practices;
- Identify key contacts for Sudden Oak Death information in your area; and
- Acquire further information on the Task Force and sign up at to receive monthly electronic updates, breaking news, and information on upcoming seminars.