



News Release

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PROLONGED DROUGHT IMPACTING GEORGIA TREES

Trees across Georgia are changing color, and it's not due to an early fall. According to the Georgia Forestry Commission, the prolonged drought is putting dangerous stress on trees, causing leaves and pine needles to curl, drop or change colors. Increased pest activity is another health issue taking its toll on drought-stricken trees.

"We're seeing a great number of hardwoods suffering from the lack of rain," said Mark Raines, Forest Health Specialist with the Georgia Forestry Commission. "Some trees may be cutting their losses and shutting down by dropping their leaves this season and preparing for next season," said Raines. Of the hardwood species affected, he said red oaks seem to be impacted the most, and white oak, post oak, dogwood, and maple are experiencing leaf drop and color change. "If the trees that shut down this summer have sufficient starch reserves, they should re-foliate next spring. Those trees with low or no starch reserves will probably succumb to diseases like hypoxylon canker, other pathogens and/or insects."

Raines said there is an epidemic outbreak of southern pine beetles in central Georgia. "The southern pine beetle is the most damaging forest pest in the southeastern U.S. and is responsible for over \$250 million in timber losses since 1972 in Georgia." Raines said the extended drought, combined with dense, mature stands of certain native species of pines, create ideal conditions for this insect to cause tremendous damage.

According to the GFC, homeowners should evaluate their trees now and look for anything out of the ordinary. That includes sap seeping from bark, smaller leaves that are less green than usual, leaf spots, branch die-back in the canopy or leaves dropping or changing color early. Excessive sawdust at the base of trees may indicate the infestation of beetles. Hardwoods showing symptoms should be reevaluated in the spring to see which ones will re-foliate. Tree removal is not recommended unless the tree is showing obvious signs of death with decaying fruiting bodies (mushroom-like structures) on the tree or evidence of numerous wood-boring insects. The GFC recommends hiring a Certified Arborist to assist with tree health issues.

"Certified arborists are trained to remedy hazardous tree situations," said Susan Reisch, Urban and Community Forestry Coordinator for the Georgia Forestry Commission's Sustainable Community Forestry Program, "They are a valuable resource that can provide homeowners with annual tree assessments and provide major tree care, if needed."

To locate a certified arborist, and for information about drought damage and tree health issues, visit the Georgia Forestry Commission website at www.gatrees.org or call 1-800-GA TREES.

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