

OAK WILT QUALIFICATION

Over the last several years, ISAT has received requests from members who would like to see the “Oak Wilt Certification” program improved. When the program was first developed, it was designed to convey to the public that the person holding the designation met some minimum level of knowledge. The primary problem with the “Oak Wilt Certification” is there is no assessment of knowledge; the holder merely had to sit through the workshop.

Improving the oak wilt workshop has been on the board’s agenda for the past couple of years. Shortly after being voted back on the board, I was asked to chair the committee responsible for developing and implementing improvements to the workshop. One of the recommendations was to change the designation from a “Certification” to a “Qualification.” The primary difference between “Oak Wilt Certification” and “Oak Wilt Qualification” is that now, each Oak Wilt Qualified arborist must pass a written exam at the end of the workshop indicating a basic understanding of oak wilt biology, diagnosis and currently accepted management practices.

The workshop will be open to anyone wishing to attend, but there are prerequisites before you can be listed on the ISAT website as “Oak Wilt Qualified.” In addition to passing the test, you must be an ISAT member in good standing, and you must be an ISA Certified Arborist or ISA Board Certified Master Arborist. To be listed on the ISAT website as an “Oak Wilt Vendor,” you must have all the Oak Wilt Qualification requirements as well as a TDA pesticide applicators license (required to sell any chemical application). The Oak Wilt Qualification will be good for five (5) years. There will be a three (3) year transitional period for previously “Oak Wilt Certified” arborists, after that “Oak Wilt Certified” will no longer be used.

The first Oak Wilt Qualification course will be held on June 9-10, 2016, in Granbury, TX. Class size will be limited to 25. Priority registration will be given to ISA certified arborists or ISA board certified master arborists who are TDA licensed applicators. Based on results of the first workshop and its evaluations, minor changes will be made and 2-3 Oak Wilt Qualification workshops will be offered in 2017.

On the first day of the Oak Wilt Qualification workshop, Dr. David Appel, Texas A&M University, will cover tree biology and CODIT. He will then discuss the epidemiology of *Ceratocystis fagacearum* (oak wilt) and how that relates to the recommended management strategies in Texas. That will be followed by a discussion of how oak wilt relates to other tree diseases and problems, such as drought. Robert Edmonson, Texas A&M Forest Service, will discuss the Texas A&M Forest Service’s “Oak Wilt Suppression Project.” He will explain the state’s role, the practices and protocols of the project and how commercial arborists can participate.

Day two will be in the field at an oak wilt center. Mr. Edmonson will explain the five steps to diagnosing oak wilt and how to develop a management plan. Dr. Appel will demonstrate the proper way to perform a fungicide macro-injection. The Oak Wilt Qualification exam will be conducted in the field utilizing the disease center.

This workshop is not designed to be a comprehensive training on tree injection; ISAT is developing a training course that that will discuss the science of tree injection and approaches to successfully injecting trees for a variety of purposes, not limited to oak wilt. This new Oak Wilt Qualification workshop will include an assessment as well as hands-on experience in the field to gain practical experience in the art of injecting trees. The registration link will be emailed to the ISAT contact list in the near future.

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Texas Chapter ISA Director