

PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

EMERALD ISLE PSA: LAUREL WILT

The following information is being provided by the [NC Forest Service](#).



ADULT REDBAY AMBROSIA BEETLE (ABOUT 1/16" LONG)



VASCULAR STREAKING VISIBLE (BLACK) IN REDBAY TREE KILLED BY LAUREL WILT



FRASS TOOTHPICKS CAUSED BY THE REDBAY AMBROSIA BEETLE

What is laurel wilt disease?

Laurel wilt is a devastating disease of redbay and other plants in the laurel family.

What trees are impacted?

Sassafras, redbay, swampbay, pondberry, pondspice and spicebush are in the laurel family and can be affected by this disease. Redbay trees that are infected with laurel wilt cling to their leaves even after the tree has died allowing for easier detection during the winter months.

How do trees in the laurel family become infected?

Trees are infected with the fungus that causes laurel wilt disease by the invasive redbay ambrosia beetle. Native to southeastern Asia, the beetle was first detected in the U.S. in 2004 near Savannah, Ga. It has since spread to 11 states, from Texas to Virginia. The pest is believed to travel about 20 miles per year naturally but spreads more quickly when transported in firewood.

Redbay ambrosia beetles do not feed on the trees themselves but rather on the laurel wilt fungus. Female beetles bore into trees, carrying the fungus with them. Once inside the tree, she makes tunnels and lays eggs. Fungal spores begin to grow in these tunnels, blocking the movement of water and causing the tree to wilt and eventually die. Trees typically die within weeks or months of infection.

What symptoms should residents be on the lookout for relative to trees that are potentially infected with laurel wilt disease?

Symptoms of laurel wilt disease include drooping reddish-purple foliage. Evidence of a redbay ambrosia beetle attack may be found in the main stem; often threads of chewed wood, called frass toothpicks, can be seen sticking out of entry holes. Removal of tree bark reveals black streaking in the outer wood.

What should people do when handling a tree that's infected?

Currently, there is not a reliable method of treating laurel wilt and insecticides have been ineffective at stopping beetle attacks. Fungicides may be used to prevent infection by the fungus but they are costly and require reapplication. The best defense continues to be slowing the spread by using local or treated firewood and by notifying the local NCFS county ranger if laurel wilt is suspected. Homeowners with dead redbay trees are encouraged to keep cut trees on their property. Infected or dead trees should not be moved off site or into areas that are not currently affected by this disease. Proper disposal of redbay trees includes leaving wood on-site, cutting or chipping wood on-site, or burning wood on-site in compliance with local and state ordinances.

You can obtain a burn permit at any authorized permitting agent or online at <https://www.ncforestservice.gov/burnpermit>.

Detailed laurel wilt FAQ on the NCFS website.

https://www.ncforestservice.gov/forest_health/forest_health_laurelwiltfaq.htm

If you have further questions please contact the [NC Forest Service](#) for further information.