



Tree Conservation Notes

Athens-Clarke County Community Tree Program

Oak Leaf Blister

A common disease that affects our oak trees, especially water oaks, here in Athens and throughout the Southeast is *oak leaf blister*. This fungal disease is caused by *Taphrina caerulescens* and other *Taphrina* species. In spring the spores of the fungus are carried by wind and rain and are lodged in bud scales, where they remain until the next spring when infection occurs. The fungus infects the leaves in the spring and small, rough, concave or convex spots begin to appear. These spots become pale green and thicken, and by summer the brown “blisters” become very noticeable (see Figures 1 and 2). Trees with oak leaf blister commonly drop some leaves prematurely and in some cases will begin to leaf out again, especially if the trees drop a large number of their leaves in the early summer. The fungus does not normally cause tree death, but can cause a reduction in tree health and vigor because of the loss of leaves (and food-producing capacity), and the need to use stored energy to produce new leaves.



Figure 1. Oak leaf blister on water oak.



Figure 2. Close-up of blisters.

While oak leaf blister does not usually seriously affect the overall health of a tree, it is unsightly. Chemical control is generally not recommended, however in some cases control may be desirable. The Georgia Cooperative Extension Service recommends applying a fungicide spray when leaf buds swell in the spring and reapplying at 7-10 day

intervals until the leaf fully expands to reduce disease.

The Alabama Cooperative Extension Service recommends the following:

- On small, newly established or especially valuable specimen oak trees previously damaged by leaf blister, apply a protective fungicide. Apply the fungicide at budswell.
- The following fungicides are labeled for use on oak to control oak leaf blister: Bordeaux mixture, Daconil WDG, Daconil 2787, Daconil 2787 75W, Daconil Multipurpose Fungicide 29.6F, Dithane M-45 80W, Fore 80W. Always follow label recommendations and precautions.

References:

Florida Forest Diseases, **Oak leaf blister**, University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, www.sfr.c.ufl.edu/4h/oakleafb.htm

Oak Leaf Blister, Jacqueline Mullen, Extension Plant Pathologist and Diagnostician
Austin Hagan, Extension Plant Pathologist, Professor, Plant Pathology, 9/95,
www.acesag.auburn.edu/department/ipm/olb.htm

For more information, contact the Athens-Clarke County Community Forestry Coordinator at (706)613-3561 voice, (706)613-3566 fax, or by e-mail at forester@athensclarkecounty.com