

Update on Tree Care in Circle C
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The Circle C Homeowners Association takes care of about 2,000 shade trees in the commons areas. As you can imagine, this is always a challenge, and has been particularly difficult with our recent drought conditions. During the drought of 2011, Circle C Landscape hand watered all trees on the commons areas on a rotational schedule from July through November.

Nevertheless, the tree canopy throughout Central Texas was significantly damaged by the 2011 drought. This situation has caused a rise in a fungus called hypoxylon which leaves healthy trees alone, but attacks trees that have been weakened. A number of trees behind the monument on the southwest side of Escarpment/Slaughter succumbed to this fungus, for which there is no recourse or treatment.

Currently, Circle C Landscape is supervising a certified arborist to do quite a bit of tree care in the neighborhood. The trees marked with the green and yellow ribbons along Escarpment, LaCrosse and Circle C North are burr oaks. They are particularly vulnerable to heat stress. The ones that are marked have received a water fertilization which aerates the soil and provides food for the tree.

As far as oak wilt, there are pockets of it throughout Circle C. Over the past year, we have treated trees with the appropriate fungicide at Circle C North, and on South Bay. Other areas of concern are the Wildflower Park park area, where oak wilt has existed for many years. The trees have been treated and receive booster treatments as recommended. This site is also used by the Texas Forest Service as a training area for oak wilt remediation. Two years ago, the CCHOA worked with the City of Austin on obtaining a grant for an oak wilt trench to be dug on the south side of Slaughter across from Circle C North, and all the trees in that area were treated as well. In Circle C North, there has been recurrence of oak wilt up near the front. All of the trees in the right of way area were treated three years ago, and have been treated again. On Escarpment, there are several homes which back to Escarpment who have lost their trees to oak wilt on the east side, and they have not removed those trees. The trees on the common area and in the median within range of the diagnosed oak wilt on Escarpment have been treated. In the greenbelt between Back Bay and Gorham Glen, there was an oak wilt diagnosis earlier this year. The affected tree was removed and all trees within 150 feet were treated. Several years ago, a tree in the extension to South Bay succumbed to oak wilt and the trees by the post office and the end of the street at South Bay were treated. They have received a booster just last week. When it looks like someone has left kegs under a tree, that particular tree is getting an oak wilt treatment.

The trees on Escarpment that look weak and yellow are primarily water oaks that are not suited to our alkaline soils. They were imported from Houston at the beginning of the development. They look perpetually out of iron --i.e. yellow--and are subject to disease. We remove these as they decline, which is good as the medians are very crowded with trees.

At the new Community Center, the trees were examined by a certified arborist prior to construction and no oak wilt or disease was detected. Prior to and during construction, a number of treatments in terms of fertilization and pest control were performed. We have also had the City Arborist examine the trees since construction and find them to be in good health.

This winter, the trees on the Slaughter Lane median and sides will receive a health prune. This will be to remove dead wood, lift the canopies and take out anything that would interfere with the health of the tree.

New homeowners with new trees need to be aware that watering trees for the first year cannot be ignored. The trees need the water to establish, but are also sensitive to overwatering. You want to water them deeply and then let them dry out in between watering.

We encourage everyone in Circle C to contact a certified arborist if you have any questions about the health of your trees. The City of Austin Grow Green program also has a very good pamphlet on tree care available at www.growgreen.org/.