

PRESCRIPTION PROGRAMS

BACTERIAL WETWOOD/SLIMFLUX

Over the past several growing seasons, there have been more inquiries about slime flux and/or wet wood than any other problem on shade trees. The foul-smelling and unsightly seepage of sap from the trunk of shade trees is commonly called slime flux or wet wood. It occurs in Apple, Birch, Elm, Hemlock, Maple, Mulberry, Oak, Poplar and Willow. In the Metro Atlanta Area slime flux is very common in large, mature, landscape Oaks, Tulip Poplar and Elms. This disease is not normally a serious problem if the tree is otherwise healthy. A concern would be attracting Ambrosia Beetles to the stressed tree from the fluxing.



Description:

Slime flux is a bacterial disease. The infected wood is frequently discolored or appears water soaked (wet wood). Gas (carbon dioxide) is produced by fermentation by bacteria. The gas produces pressure in the wood. This pressure forces sap from the trunk through cracks in branch crotch unions, pruning wounds, lawn mower wounds, and other injuries. This oozing of sap is termed fluxing. The flux is colorless to tan at first but darkens up exposure to the air. As fluxing continues, large areas of the bark become soaked. Many different microorganisms grow in the flux producing a foul or alcoholic smell. Various types of insects are attracted to the slime flux. If the fluxing continues for months, leaves on affected branches may be stunted and chlorotic. The vascular tissue of the tree usually dies over time causing secondary fungal diseases to attack the tree.



In recent years many large mature landscape Oaks have had problems with slime flux on the trunk or large exposed flare roots just above the soil line with no apparent wounds or injuries. Sap may continue to ooze for several weeks or months, but usually it eventually stops with no treatment and no apparent damage to the tree. This slime flux may be triggered by heat, drought and other stress.

Treatment:

There are no curative or preventive measures for slime flux except to maintain trees in a general good state of vigor and minimize wounds and injuries. More damage can be done to the tree in attempting to cure slime flux than the flux will do alone. It has been a common practice with slime flux on American elms to drill a hole in the trunk and insert a pipe, which **does not cure** the problem. Inserting a pipe only allows the sap to drip on the ground and not run down the trunk and insert a pipe, which does not cure the problem. Inserting a pipe only allows the sap to drip on the ground and not run down the trunk.

Installing a drain pipe is **not** recommended in most cases because it does little good; moreover, slime flux on oaks occurs too close to the ground. If there is loose or dead bark in the slime flux area, remove all of the loose bark and allow the area to dry. Do not apply a wound dressing. You can apply 100% solution of Hydrogen peroxide from a spray bottle to the infected areas until dried out.