

## Explosive growth in sudden oak death

Peter Fimrite

Published 11:22 pm, Tuesday, October 9, 2012

VIEW: **LARGER** | HIDE

1 of 6

◀ PREV NEXT ▶



Doug Schmidt takes samples from a coastal oak tree believed to have been killed by sudden oak death in Golden Gate Park. The disease has spread throughout the Bay Area. Photo: Brant Ward, The Chronicle



Photo Galleries Displaying 1-3 of 40 « »



Michelle Shocked



Two Napa Valley classic restaurants



'Game of Thrones' Season 3 premiere

From Around the Web

- [Restaurant owners: Turnover tables quicker with right wiping strategy \(Tork USA\)](#)
- [Jessica Chastain's See-Through Pants: Big Mistake or Sheer Perfection? \(Stylelist\)](#)
- [Supermodel Heidi Klum's Kid Is Growing Up Gorgeous \(StyleBistro\)](#)

[?]

Most Read | Most Commented

1. Shocked shows canceled in wake of anti-gay tirade
2. SF police officer kills biting dog
3. Lululemon pulls yoga pants — too revealing
4. Shocked show shut down over gay slur
5. 49ers sign Dawson to replace Akers
6. Chez Panisse fire update: Damage worse than thought, 'more significant demolition project' looms
7. Update: Steubenville rapist

Today's Deal

**\$49 -- All-Day Salmon or Cod Deep Sea Fishing off Monterey**

31 **Tweet** 123 **Like** 3 **Share** 6

🗨 Comments (0) ✉ Email This

🔍 Larger | Smaller 📄 Font

📄 Printable Version

The number of oak trees in California that died from the virulent forest disease known as sudden oak death has increased tenfold in just a year's time as the pathogen spread into several new parts of the Bay Area, including San Francisco's Golden Gate Park, biologists revealed this week.

Aerial and ground surveys conducted by the [U.S. Forest Service](#) documented 375,700 new cases of

dead live oak and tan oak trees over 54,400 acres of California where the pathogen is known to exist. That's compared to 38,000 dead trees covering 8,000 acres a year ago.

The sudden increase in deaths is believed to have been caused by two years of abnormally

high rainfall followed by this year's dry weather.

The pattern is one that scientists at the [UC Berkeley Forest Pathology and Mycology Laboratory](#) foresaw last year when the deadly microbe was detected in woodlands and residential areas throughout the Bay Area. The area of infection expanded even more this year, said [Matteo Garbelotto](#), the forest pathologist who heads the lab.

Sudden oak death, discovered in Mill Valley in 1995, exists in forests and wildlands in 14 California counties and in Curry County, Ore. It kills big oak trees and the smaller understory tan oaks, which have been ravaged in portions of Big Sur, Jack London State Park in Sonoma County, China Camp State Park in Marin County and the Marin Municipal Water District watershed lands near Mount Tamalpais. Scientists fear the pathogen could one day wipe out all of the state's live and tan oaks.

### 107 host plants

The disease, known scientifically as *Phytophthora ramorum*, has 107 susceptible host plants. Infected California bay laurels are the most effective spreaders of the deadly microbe, but such common garden ornamentals as camellias and rhododendrons can also spread the pathogen to oaks.

Samples from California bay laurels and other host plants taken by volunteers around the Bay Area show that the pathogen's spores are virtually everywhere in the hills of Burlingame and other parts of the Peninsula, and the infection has spread farther into residential areas of the East Bay hills, and Napa and Sonoma counties.

The microbe was even found in neighborhoods on the outskirts of Santa Cruz and, most surprising of all, in a cluster of three trees near Middle Lake, in the southwest corner of Golden Gate Park, near Sunset Boulevard.

The source of the San Francisco infection, which has yet to kill any trees, is a mystery given that there are no nurseries nearby spreading the disease like there were several years ago when the pathogen was last detected in the park near the AIDS Memorial Grove, Garbelotto said.

"The area doesn't have a lot of oaks, so I'm not worried about oaks there, but I'm worried about other plants being infected and, of course, people carrying it on their shoes," Garbelotto said. "It's puzzling that we found it there because it's a totally urban environment, and I really didn't expect it. It shows how complicated and adaptable this organism is."

### Mapping the spread

Garbelotto's lab has been putting together a comprehensive map detailing the spread of the tree-killing microbe by plotting the test results from thousands of bay laurels and other hosts taken by citizen volunteers. The map, called SODMAP, is updated every year in an effort to help cities, counties and homeowners try to protect endangered oak trees by, among other measures, treating them with phosphites or removing the nearby bays.

Residents of the Burlingame Hills neighborhood have begun just such a treatment program. A recent outbreak in Atherton appears to have been eradicated this way, Garbelotto said.

The spike in tree deaths detected this year during Forest Service flyovers is not unprecedented. Researchers counted 832,300 dead oak trees in 2007, which, like this year, was a dry year following a very wet year.

"We've seen this pattern before after wet years," said [Katie Palmieri](#), spokeswoman for the [California Oak Mortality Task Force](#). "The key to all this is rapid response so we can see containment and hopefully eradication."

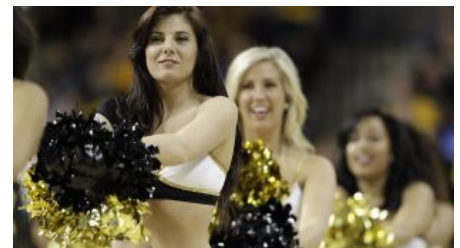
### Sudden oak death



SALE ENDS IN  
5d:08h:16m  
PRICE  
▲ ▼



#### FROM OUR HOMEPAGE



#### Cheerleader madness!

What's a Big Dance without dancers? See the pom-pom waving squads of your favorite teams.



#### Shocked waves after slurs

Numerous clubs on singer's nat'l tour cancel shows after her anti-gay rant at Yoshi's in SF.



#### 49ers get Akers replacement

S.F. lands veteran who ranks among the NFL's all-time leaders for field-goal consistency.

Community meetings, maps and treatment information may be found at [bit.ly/HW8EFN](http://bit.ly/HW8EFN).

Peter Fimrite is a San Francisco Chronicle staff writer. E-mail: [pfimrite@sfgchronicle.com](mailto:pfimrite@sfgchronicle.com)

Twitter: [@pfimrite](https://twitter.com/pfimrite)

Printable Version   Email This   Like <   Tweet < 31   3   Share 6

From Around the Web [What's this?]

- Things We Should Probably Never Do Again After 50 (AARP.org)
- For Everyone Shocked By What Just Happened... And Why This Is... (InvestingChannel)
- Why You Shouldn't Buy A Hybrid (Consumer Car Reviews)
- Quiz: Do You Have Adult ADHD? (HealthCentral)
- How Working Will Effect Your Retirement (Charles Schwab)
- Cardinals pitcher Chris Carpenter says he's likely to never... (Sports Illustrated)

We Recommend

- SF grow-house hostage drama ends in arrest
- Ind. inmate charged with raping girl, 10, in 1988
- Stanford keep Dawkins but want more wins
- Compensatory picks, 49ers' stash and '97 Dolphins draft
- Sex offender removed from Oxnard commissioner post
- Woman charged in \$2,100 theft from Maine church



Subscribe to the San Francisco Chronicle and receive access to the Chronicle for iPad App and a gift:

- Sunday + a \$15 gift card
- Fri-Sun + a \$15 gift card
- Mon-Sun + a \$25 gift card

Select an offer



Add Your Comment

New to the site?

To use commenting, you need to sign up.

[Register](#)

Already a member?

Please log in. ([Forgot Password?](#))

Username

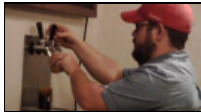
Password

Remember Me

[Sign In](#)

Inside SFGate

Displaying 1-4 of 12 [«](#) [»](#)



Craft beer craze boosts Calif. economy



A family's car-racing tragedy



2013 James Beard Awards nominations



Kids under 14 can't go solo to Disney parks

Ads by Yahoo!

[Treat Sudden Oak Death](#)

Save oak trees with Tree Injection for Sudden Oak Death & [www.arborjet.com/oak](http://www.arborjet.com/oak)

[Fairfax Tree Service](#)

Certified Arborist, Removal, Pruning, Trimming, [www.marintreeservice.com](http://www.marintreeservice.com)

[San Francisco Giants Sh](#)

Official Houston Astros Gea Francisco Giants Fans [FastballFanatics.com/Houste](http://FastballFanatics.com/Houste)

Spc

© 2013 Hearst Communications Inc.

