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Smart phone users can now detect tree-killing disease

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Scientists have developed a smart phone App that can be used to determine if trees and plants in the field have been infected with the deadly pathogen known as sudden oak death.

The App, known as SODMAP mobile, connects the viewer to a comprehensive map detailing the spread of the tree-killing microbe. The app, which uses global positioning technology, will calculate for users the threat to oaks in the area and display on the screen whether trees are at high risk, moderate risk, low risk or if there is insufficient data to determine the rate of infection in the vicinity, said UC Berkeley forest pathologist Matteo Garbelotto.



“This is the first time an App gets developed with such a purpose, not just mapping but risk assessment, for an environmental issue,” said Garbelotto, whose Forest Pathology and Mycology

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Laboratory has spent the past few years plotting test results taken by volunteers participating in so-called SOD-Blitzes.

The California Native Plant Society is helping organize volunteers this spring and summer to test trees in Santa Cruz, Orinda, Berkeley, San Francisco, Saratoga, Burlingame, Woodside, Atherton and Los Altos Hills. The results will be added to the interactive map on the mobile App, which was funded by the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation and is now available to be uploaded. It is all part of an effort to help cities, counties and homeowners try to protect endangered oak trees.

It's important, Garbelotto said, because biologists revealed last September that the number of oak trees in California that died from the disease increased tenfold between 2011 and 2012 and that the pathogen spread into several new parts of the Bay Area, including San Francisco's Golden Gate Park.

Posted By: [Peter Fimrite \(Email\)](#) | Apr 23 at 11:51 am

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