



Oak trees are seen on the hills off Santa Rosa Creek Road, bottom right, between Cambria and Highway 46 in this 2011 photo. **Cambrian file photo** - The Tribune

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California wants to train residents to identify trees with sudden oak death

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While an unusually wet winter has ended the drought in most of California, according to the governor, the soggy situation also has increased the risk of spreading a serious invasive disease that's killing several species of oak trees.

The state's Oak Mortality Task Force is enlisting as many "citizen scientists" as possible, including in San Luis Obispo County, for an upcoming survey to locate trees infested with sudden oak death or SOD.

Training sessions will be held May 11 in San Luis Obispo and May 12 in Atascadero.

ADVERTISING

Researchers have found infected trees — including the bay laurels that can spread the disease — along Santa Rosa Creek Road and in other areas of the county.

Sudden oak death is the primary cause of tree mortality in coastal California, with more than 5 million trees having died in since its discovery in the mid-1990s, according to task force participants.

SOD Blitz

Task force officials say the 2017 “SOD Blitz” survey is designed to educate the community about the disease and its impact, involve local residents in detecting the disease, and produce detailed local maps of disease distribution.

Volunteers will sample bay laurel leaves that are suspected of carrying the disease. The blitz consists of a one-hour training session and the leaf-collection process. The training is free, and all necessary materials will be provided.

San Luis Obispo County training sessions will be held from 1 to 4 p.m. Thursday, May 11, at the San Luis Obispo County Department of Agriculture, 2156 Sierra Way, San Luis Obispo, and from 6 to 8 p.m. Friday, May 12, at the Atascadero Library, Martin Polin Community Room, 6555 Capistrano Ave., Atascadero.

Collections will take place on May 13 and 14.

Matteo Garbelotto, a forest pathologist and adjunct professor at UC Berkeley who runs the SOD blitzes, said in a media release that “it is essential that we have as many eyes in the field as possible looking for SOD symptoms this spring. With all of the wet weather, it is likely that *Phytophthora ramorum* is on the move. Super-sized SOD Blitz surveys will more thoroughly inform communities about local pathogen activity, empowering them to make educated decisions about where best to focus

preventive treatments and manage for the pathogen to help protect susceptible oaks. Prevention is key.”

Get further details and register for the SOD Blitz training at <http://ucanr.edu/sites/mgslo>.



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