



Georgia Department of Agriculture
Tommy Irvin, Commissioner
19 Martin Luther King Jr. Dr. SW
Atlanta, GA 30334
www.agr.state.ga.us

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Georgia AG Finds SOD Fungus in Wholesale Nursery Sample

ATLANTA – Georgia Department of Agriculture inspectors have found the fungus that causes Sudden Oak Death in a small mountain laurel shipment to a wholesale nursery in Norcross, Commissioner of Agriculture Tommy Irvin said today.

“Fungicides will not kill this pathogen on infected plants,” said Commissioner Irvin. “Our means of control is to prevent the infected plants from entering Georgia. Even though this shipment involves 15 plants, eight of them were still at the nursery. We’re tracking every possible movement of these plants.”

This detection was a result of the ongoing efforts among state and federal organizations to determine if this disease has spread from California to other states. The Sudden Oak Death pathogen is primarily spread through the movement and handling of nursery plants that are hosts for this disease.

The woody ornamental hosts that were shipped to Georgia and are most likely to exhibit symptoms of disease are *Camellia*, *Kalmia* (mountain laurel), *Leucothoe*, *Pieris*, *Rhododendron*, *Viburnum* and *Vaccinium* (blueberry).

Do not try to dig up a suspected infected plant or attempt to destroy it yourself, say agriculture and forestry officials. Homeowners who have purchased any of these plants and notice leaf spots or plant dieback should contact their local county agent to have the plant sampled. Homeowners also can contact the Georgia Department of Agriculture for the Homeowner Landscape Survey.*

(more)

PRESS RELEASE

For information contact:
Jackie Sosby or Arty Schronce
(404) 656-3689

Oak trees are essentially the last major nut-bearing trees on the East Coast. Consequently, agricultural and forestry officials are concerned about the potential impact this pathogen could have on forest ecosystems and wildlife throughout the United States.

“Virtually all of the research on this pathogen has been conducted on material from the West Coast,” Commissioner Irvin said. “Since we do not know how it will affect our Southern and Eastern forests, we must be very cautious until more is known about this disease.”

Since March 2004, Georgia Department of Agriculture, Plant Protection Division Inspectors have been sampling known hosts of this disease. In 2003 and 2004, Georgia received more than 60,000 host plants from nurseries in California and Oregon that had material to test positive for the Sudden Oak Death pathogen.

While not all of those plants were infected, several Georgia nurseries had plants to test positive last year for *Phytophthora ramorum*. The infected plants were destroyed and subsequent test results for this disease were negative.

The Georgia Department of Agriculture, the Animal Plant Health Inspection Service, Plant Protection Quarantine section of USDA, the University of Georgia Extension Service (county agents), and the Georgia Forestry Commission are cooperating in the effort to prevent the invasion of the fungus into our natural landscape.

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***For Homeowner Landscape Survey, contact GDA’s Plant Protection Division at 404-651-9486 or e-mail plantindustry@agr.state.ga.us and put Homeowner Survey in the subject line.**

****For more information on Sudden Oak Death, visit the following websites:**

<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq/ispm/sod>

<http://www.invasive.org/sod.cfm>

<http://www.suddenoakdeath.org>

<http://www.plantmanagementnetwork.org>