

Laurel wilt at Chesnut Park

Officials with Pinellas County Parks and Conservation Resources have determined that hundreds of trees in Pinellas County's John Chesnut Park have been stricken with laurel wilt disease. John Chesnut Park is in the East Lake area bordering the southern tip of Lake Tarpon.

Laurel wilt disease typically affects swamp bay and red bay laurels as well as the avocado tree. The disease is caused by a fungus carried by a small beetle. The fungus interferes with a tree's vascular system and causes leaves to wilt and take on a reddish or purplish discoloration, eventually leading to the death of the tree. Leaves can stay on a dead tree for up to a year.



Signs of laurel wilt on a red bay laurel in John Chesnut Park

A single case of laurel wilt was detected in the park approximately 16 months ago and the affected tree was subsequently removed. But now, hundreds of trees seem to be infected with the disease, and it is expected to move to trees in nearby Brooker Creek Preserve.

"There is no cure for the disease once a tree becomes infected," says Dr. Steven Harper with Pinellas County's Environmental Division. "Unfortunately, we'll just have to allow the disease to run its course in the park, and remove trees that become hazardous to park patrons."

Officials recommend that homeowners contact a certified arborist if they have concerns about avocado or specimen trees in their yards, or contact the certified horticulturists at [Pinellas County Extension](#).

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