

Problem: Bacterial Wetwood or Slime Flux



Hosts: Affects many species of trees but is most common on elms, cottonwood and willow.

Description: Wetwood, also known as slime flux is a bacterial disease that causes a smelly slime to ooze out of a tree. Gas pressure will sometimes cause the slime to foam. The flow of the ooze will bleach the bark to a lighter color. The ooze is toxic to the cambium layer of the tree and can retard the formation of callus tissue that normally covers pruning wounds. Though the strength of the wood may be disturbed, the effect is minor as the disease also inhibits wood-rotting organisms. However, dripping ooze can kill leaves, young shoots and any grass it comes in contact with.

The bacteria that cause wetwood are common in soil and water and likely enter the tree through wounds in the roots. However, the disease can also be transmitted through infected seed or infected plants that are vegetatively propagated through cuttings or other methods.

Recommendations: Trees with wetwood cannot be cured. However, this disease rarely affects the overall health of the tree and so no treatment is needed other than preventing additional stress through timely waterings. Though drain tubes have been recommended in the past to relieve pressure, they no longer are suggested as they create an additional wound that may make the disease worse.

References:

1. [Bacterial Wetwood](#), Colorado State University Extension Publication no. 2.910

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