OAN Press Release

News from the **O**regon **A**ssociation of **N**urserymen

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Phytophthora ramorum strain at Gresham nursery is found to be European

The news is good for Oregon's nursery and greenhouse industry and makes unlikely a California or Curry County connection

The Oregon Department of Agriculture and Oregon State University's Botany and Plant Pathology Program jointly announced today results of lab tests of infected plant material found at a nursery in Gresham, Oregon. The results indicate the strain of *Phytophthora ramorum* recovered from the nursery is identical to a type found in Europe and is not the type found in California. This represents further evidence the discovery of *P. ramorum* in an Oregon nursery is an isolated incident, and did not result from the uncontrolled spread of the pathogen from California.

The finding eliminates the type of *P. ramorum* affecting California and Curry County, Oregon, forests as the pathogen found at Furney's Nursery, located in Gresham. ODA staff indicate the DNA of the *P. ramorum* isolated from infected material found at Furney's is an identical match to *P. ramorum* isolated from European plant material by a German laboratory.

Now the question is, "How exactly did the European-type of the pathogen get to a nursery in Gresham?'" said John Aguirre, executive director of the Oregon Association of Nurserymen. "The finding effectively rules out the possibility the pathogen spread by natural means from California."

ODA officials believe the disease most likely reached the 30-acre Gresham nursery on commercial nursery stock and, in the absence of any evidence of infection in areas surrounding the affected nursery, officials are calling this an isolated case. ODA's investigation continues and officials ordered destroyed all known infected material and all *P. ramorum*-susceptible host material near the infected nursery stock. Furney's has cooperated fully with ODA and has burned several thousand plants.

"Oregon State University's test results shine a light on a serious risk: imported European nursery stock represents the most likely source for introducing *P. ramorum* to areas in North America outside of California," said Mark Krautmann, OAN president and an owner of a Salem-area nursery. "We don't want to and we should not close our borders to Europe, but everyone who imports European plant material must be made aware of the risks and should carefully question their European suppliers about this plant disease. Most importantly, no one should bring into this country plant material that does not fully comply with all USDA regulations."

USDA reported in February 2003 that 273 sites in Europe tested positive for the presence of the *P. ramorum*, with the majority of those sites being commercial nurseries.

After the discovery of the California type of *P. ramorum* in Curry County in 2001, and at the urging of the OAN, ODA began surveying and testing Oregon nurseries that grew host plant material and/or had extensive commercial ties with California nurseries. The 2001 and 2002 surveys found several common varieties of *Phytophthora*, but no instances of *P. ramorum*. The discovery of *P. ramorum* at the Gresham nursery occurred after ODA had completed about two-thirds of its 2003 survey for the pathogen.

ODA officials quarantined the nursery and, with the nursery manager's assistance, the affected plant material was destroyed. Adjacent properties were surveyed, and ODA has since completed its 2003 SOD survey of Oregon nurseries. No other incidents were reported.

"Given the European risk, the OAN will press the U.S. Department of Agriculture to conduct an aggressive nationwide survey for *Phytophthora ramorum*," Krautmann said. "The incident in Oregon is a model of effectiveness. Early detection results in early intervention, thus protecting the industry from major marketplace disruption."

Gresham is located in Clackamas County, which is a close second among Oregon counties in the production of nursery and greenhouse plant material, the state's biggest agricultural crop with more than $700 million in sales in 2002. Clackamas County nursery and greenhouse growers sold more than $160 million of product in 2002, falling just short of Marion County. The two counties flip-flopped at the top positions from 2001 to 2002.

Sudden Oak Death is the popularized name for a plant disease caused by *Phytophthora ramorum*, a fungus-like organism affecting susceptible trees and woody shrubs. *Phytophthora* species are water molds with approximately 60 different species recognized worldwide. Researchers continue to expand the list of plant species susceptible to *P. ramorum* — with more than 20 known susceptible species. The disease can produce rapid decline in tanoak and in susceptible species of oak, characterized by bleeding cankers on the lower trunk of trees. These cankers produce a sticky, very reddish substance. Mortality appears less likely with other plant species. Damage from SOD in rhododendron, for example, typically involves leaf spotting, cankers on small branches and stems, and/or stem dieback.

For more information, log on to the ODA Web site at www.oda.state.or.us/plant/ppd/path/SOD/index.html, the USDA Web site at www.aphis.usda.gov/ppq/ispm/sod/ or the California Oak Mortality Task Force Web site at www.suddenoakdeath.org.

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The Oregon Association of Nurserymen, based in Wilsonville, represents more than 1,600 wholesale growers, retailers, landscapers and suppliers. Oregon's ornamental horticulture industry is the state's largest agricultural commodity, with 2002 sales of more than $700 million.