



# The Plant Doctor's LANDSCAPE TIPS

By Dr. David L. Roberts, The Plant Doctor LLC a.k.a. The Tree Doctor

## TREE DOCTOR DAVE DOES WOODSTOCK (well, uh, Holler Fest)

### INTRODUCTION

Many of my colleagues in this industry may not know that I was a Rock Star before I became a Tree Scientist (Photo 1) . . . NOT! The closest I ever came to being a musician was when I played the Cornet (trumpet) in my high school's concert band, marching band, dance band, and pep band. And, contrary to the title of this article and the circulation of a certain photo on the internet (Photo 2), I *did not* attend Woodstock in 1969. So, why am I writing this article with Woodstock in the title? Please allow me to digress a bit and explain.

### Emily and Oak Wilt

Emily and her boyfriend are building a new home in a woodland in southeast Michigan. In 2022, they noticed that several oaks had died on their prized woodland property. Unfortunately, Oak Wilt was confirmed by lab tests. Emily needed help fast if she was to save her woodland from this destructive disease. So, she

contacted a company whose arborists had completed the Oak Wilt Qualification (OWQ) program through the International Society of Arboriculture-Michigan (ISA-MI), supported by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The OWQ arborists recommended the Bruhn Model as the "official procedure" for Oak Wilt remediation on Emily's property. For those who are unfamiliar with the Bruhn Model for Root Graft Disruption (RGD) or the DNR's new version of the Bruhn Model specifying tree girdling and herbicide (triclopyr) application using the Bruhn template, many healthy trees are sacrificed . . . in my view, unnecessarily. In Emily's case, an RGD trench line was proposed and installed according to the Bruhn model at a significant cost. The RGD trench line is depicted in satellite image, Photo 3A. The next step with the Bruhn Model would be to kill all oak trees within the RGD trench line, which numbered 60+ healthy oak trees (Photo 3B). The sacrifice of so many oak trees would destroy Emily's woodland where she was already

*Continued on page 14*



Photo 1

**Photo 1:** Quite a few years ago, several friends forced me to assume the role of a rock star for this photo shoot. Contrary to popular belief, I was never a rock star in the musical sense, but I have been accused of being a "rock star" in the arboriculture world.



Photo 2

**Photo 2:** There is also a photo of me in some old Halloween hippie garb circulating on the internet. Despite the rumors, I did not attend Woodstock. Even so, the automobile, my 1968 AMC Ambassador three seat wagon, would have made a great "Love Mobile".



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Continued from page 13

building her new home and where a land restoration crew was renewing the property to its original natural woodland ecosystem by elimination of invasive species, etc. However, when the time came to start eliminating the 60+ oak trees, Emily hesitated. She lamented the loss of so many valuable, healthy oaks and the impact on her property. She wondered if there were any alternative options. After all, the destruction of so many healthy oaks would also harm her remaining diversity of tree species and hence, the ecosystem and environment during the removal process of all those oaks. Luckily, the OWQ arborists knew of my research and graciously recommended that Emily contact me. Upon visiting Emily's property in late January 2023, I described the various options for remediation other than the Bruhn Model (RGD and Triclopyr/Double Girdle). These alternative options include the Tier Tree Model for Root Graft Disruption and several variations of the Glyphosate/Stump Cup technique, all developed through my research on Oak Wilt over the last 40 years. These techniques in my arsenal of Oak Wilt Remediation options would require few to no sacrifice of healthy trees, nor result in harm to any of her other species of trees in her woodland. Because Northern Red Oak (*Quercus rubra*) comprises a predominant species in her woodland, Emily chose the 'Chaser' Glyphosate/Stump Cup technique. As many followers of my research know, with the 'Chaser' variation of the Glyphosate/Stump Cup technique, only the Oak Wilt-infected trees are treated; no healthy trees need to be purposely sacrificed or even touched.

Of particular interest given the time of year (January 2023), Emily's Land Restoration Crew, headed up by Jeremy, wanted to do the Glyphosate treatments in the winter. I had never used my Glyphosate/Stump Cup method in the winter before, but Jeremy informed me that they have frequently used Glyphosate for unwanted plant removal in the winter with excellent results. As a

scientist, I am always willing to try new things that are innovative. My motto has always been, "I'm a scientist, let's experiment!" Almost instantaneously, my thought that Oak Wilt remediation by the Glyphosate/Stump Cup procedure during the winter might open a whole new regime of Oak Wilt management options. At the time of this writing, the results look very good (Photo 3C); only two small trees seem to have been affected by the Glyphosate, but I will defer the results for another more complete article at a later time when more data has been collected. Even if we are not completely successful in stopping Oak Wilt with this procedure last winter, I am certain we can save most of Emily's oaks and woodland from destruction by this deadly disease . . . and human activity.

Most importantly, Emily is very pleased with the results thus far and has sometimes referred to me as her "hero". Which is why she asked me to be a resource at "Holler Fest".

#### What is Holler Fest?

Woodstock might be described as a "Musical Festival" where many well-known performers attended. Some of the performers included Jimi Hendrix, Janice Joplin, Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane, Joe Cocker, and Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young . . . among others. Holler Fest might also be described as a music festival of sorts but has much, much more to offer. Of course, there will be music, lots of music. Jesse Ray and the Carolina Catfish are headliners, but there will be many other performers including many local artists (Photo 4). The plethora of food options is quite amazing with food prepared from the local farm and other area vendors! And the list of activities and workshops is quite extensive, including but not limited to yoga for all age groups, nature walks, kids' shows, dance and even clogging, sauna sessions, bird ID, face painting, temporary



Photo 3A



Photo 3B



Photo 3C

**Photos 3A, 3B and 3C:** In a winter satellite image of a portion of Emily's property, the Oak Wilt epicenter is pinpointed by the yellow arrow. The yellow circle represents the Root Graft Disruption trench line that had been installed according to Oak Wilt Qualifications (OWQ) "official" guidelines. With these recommendations, all oak trees within the circle would need to be destroyed according to the Bruhn Model. Fortunately, Emily questioned the "experts" about why her woodland would need to be destroyed. Luckily, OWQ arborists recommended my involvement. At ground level, all oak trees in this photo (Photo 3B, plus many more) would need to be destroyed according to this plan; Emily's new home can barely be discerned in the distance. With implementation of the

(Roberts) Glyphosate/Stump Cup technique, no oak trees would need to be sacrificed. Photo 3C shows the three large "infected" trees (stumps) that received the Glyphosate/Stump Cup treatment in early February 2023 (tree portions above the stump were removed during the winter to prevent Overland Transmission of Oak Wilt). As of mid-June 2023, the Glyphosate/Stump Cup appears to have worked. To minimize any possibility of Overland Spread of Oak Wilt from Pressure Pads on her oak stumps, Emily and her Restoration Crew also took the added precautions of debarking the stumps and spraying them with 10% bleach solution. These extra measures will protect her community's trees from Oak Wilt infections.

tattoos, hula hoop lessons, family drum circles, etc. (Photos 5 & 6). Various types of camping are available from roughing it in the woods to full-service hookups (at a nearby park). And did I mention food?

Oak Wilt is a serious threat to tree and woodland health throughout Michigan. Emily experienced firsthand the challenge of saving her woodland ecosystem from the ravages of this devastating disease, often made far worse by individuals who attempt to remediate the problem via draconian measures. Emily is one of the primary organizers of Holler Fest. So, when she asked me to be a resource for Oak Wilt at Holler Fest 2023, I leaped at the opportunity (Photo 7). During my

more than 40-year tenure at Michigan State University, one of my primary roles was to provide research updates and educational information to our industry and the public. I believe I have accomplished this role during that entire period through the Michigan Green Industry Association (formerly the Metro-Detroit Landscape Association) and their superb publication, *The Landsculptor*. And, I have also been a frequent guest lecturer at the MGIA conferences and workshops. I visualize Holler Fest as an opportunity to spread the word about our industry and what we do. Please consider joining me at Holler Fest, which occurs

on the weekend of August 25-27. For more information, the website is [www.hollerfest.com](http://www.hollerfest.com). It should be fun! 



A small corner of Frog Holler Farm near the Cabin where kids and adults can learn about the forest. Open from dawn to dusk for self-guided tours (signs, quiz, visual scavenger hunt). Guided tours by museum curator, Sybil Kolon (tours last about half an hour). Limited seating for contemplation; the Faery Forest is nearby.

Photo 6

Photo 6: Just one of many advertised events at Holler Fest that can enlighten attendees about trees and nature. Right up our alley.



Photo 4

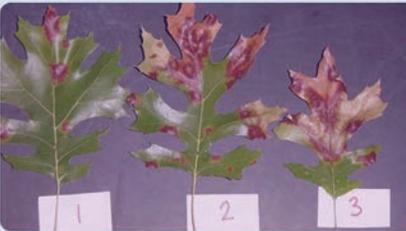
Photo 4: At Holler Fest 2023, over 60 bands are scheduled to perform. Please visit the website, [hollerfest.com](http://hollerfest.com), to see the complete listing. Many of them are favorites and well-known in the Michigan area.



Photo 5

Photo 5: A collage of photos showing some of the activities at Holler Fest in 2022 that we can experience in 2023.

### OAK WILT Q&A



Dr. David Roberts is a leading expert on Michigan plant diseases and pests. Here at the farm, we came to know him through unfortunate circumstances — an outbreak of Oak Wilt. Tree Doctor Dave (as we've come to know him) presented innovative remediation techniques to deal with the outbreak, which is currently under control. Stop by for an informal Q&A about oak wilt prevention and remediation.

- With Dr. David Roberts
- Saturday, 2:00 PM
- Meet at the Info Tent

### INSPIRATIONS IN NATURE

Photo 7

Photo 7: I feel privileged to be invited to Holler Fest 2023 to spread the word about Oak Wilt and other tree maladies.

Dr. David Roberts has retired from Michigan State University but remains active with the industry. He can be reached at 248-320-7124 or [treedoctordave@gmail.com](mailto:treedoctordave@gmail.com).