



# CAES

The Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station

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## PRESS RELEASE

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, September 29, 2023

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## 2023 Connecticut Oak Mast Survey Results

**New Haven, CT** – The Connecticut Oak Mast Surveillance Program monitors mature trees (300 red oak group, 275 white oak group) across Connecticut and annually assesses acorn crop abundance during a 2-week period in August. Despite continued widespread acorn crop failure for both red and white oaks throughout the state, Middlesex County is experiencing an average white oak acorn crop for the first time since 2016 and lower New London County is experiencing a good red oak acorn crop.

A late season frost on May 18 throughout New England may have negatively impacted pollination of oak flowers and leaf emergence this year, contributing to this year's widespread white oak acorn crop failure, and may potentially impact the 2024 red oak acorn crop; white oak acorns mature in a single growing season while red oak acorns require two. In addition to current challenges facing oak trees, widespread *Lymantria dispar* (spongy moth, formerly “gypsy” moth) outbreaks have contributed to acorn crop failure and oak mortality throughout the region.

“Oaks are a foundational component of many forested ecosystems in southern New England and their health is directly correlated with the health of the forest,” said Joseph Barsky, lead forest researcher at the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station. Acorns are a primary fall food source for over 80 wildlife species in our area, including white-tailed deer. Mr. Barsky warns Connecticut motorists to be wary this fall: “Without a consistent source of acorns, deer may wander in search of alternative food sources resulting in increased potential for collisions with vehicles.”

The Connecticut Oak Mast Surveillance Program was established by the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, Wildlife Division in 2007 and transferred to the Agricultural Experiment Station in 2021. It is coordinated along with six states throughout the eastern United States.

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