

PRESS RELEASE

Beech Leaf Disease now widespread in Connecticut

New Haven, CT – Scientists from the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station (CAES) have confirmed that Beech Leaf Disease (BLD), first detected in lower Fairfield County in 2019, is now *widespread and prevalent* on American beech (*Fagus grandifolia*) throughout Fairfield, New Haven, Middlesex, and New London Counties. It also appears to be spreading into Litchfield, Tolland, and Windham Counties, albeit less severely; to date there are no confirmed observations of BLD in Hartford County. This disease, which can kill trees within several years of detection, was first discovered in 2012 in Ohio, followed in subsequent years by detections in Pennsylvania, New York, and Ontario, Canada.

The symptoms on beech foliage, best observed from below looking up into the canopy, are characterized by dark striping between leaf veins, as pictured below (left). However, this year the symptoms are severe, and can include: aborted leaf enlargement; cupping, browning, and yellowing of foliage; branch and tip dieback; and in some cases, premature leaf drop. CAES and DEEP Forestry believe that 2020's hot and dry summer, exacerbated by this year's dry spring, are playing a role in the observed symptoms.

Beech leaf disease is caused by the foliar nematode, *Litylenchus crenatae* subsp. *mccannii*. The nematode appears to cause disease on only American, European, and Oriental beech (*F. grandifolia*, *F. sylvatica*, and *F. orientalis*). Scientists at CAES have joined forces with researchers in Ohio, Pennsylvania, New York, Ontario (Canada), and at USDA-ARS to study disease development, transmission, and control.

Given the already well-documented widespread occurrence of BLD in 2021, reports of BLD in Fairfield, New Haven, Middlesex, and New London Counties ***are no longer requested.***

