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FOR MORE INFORMATION

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Laurel Wilt Disease Identified in Miami-Dade County

Tallahassee, FL – The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services has positively identified the presence of laurel wilt disease, a destructive disease of redbay, avocado and other trees in the laurel family (Lauraceae), on three swamp bay trees in south Miami-Dade County. State and federal agriculture officials are working with the industry and University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) to determine procedures for enhanced trapping and disease management. Planning is also underway to conduct aerial surveys of the area, an effective tool for identifying additional symptomatic trees.

"The discovery of the redbay ambrosia beetle last year was a likely harbinger that laurel wilt disease was not far behind," said Dr. Wayne Dixon, Director of the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services Division of Plant Industries. "Our staff, along with our federal partners, has been conducting intensive trapping throughout the state with increased trapping efforts around Florida's economically important avocado industry," added Dixon.

Florida Agriculture Statistics reports the avocado industry represents nearly $13 million to the local economy, with more than 6,773 production acres in Miami-Dade County, with some acreage in Collier County.

The public can help prevent the spread of laurel wilt and the redbay ambrosia beetle by following these recommendations:

· Become familiar with the signs of laurel wilt disease and redbay ambrosia beetle (http://www.doacs.state.fl.us/pi/enpp/pathology/laurel_wilt_disease.html), and be on the lookout for evidence of the pest/disease on your trees;

· Use local firewood only; Do not transport firewood from other parts of Florida or other states, because destructive pests and diseases, such as redbay ambrosia beetle and laurel wilt, can hitchhike into Florida on infested firewood;

· Do not transport host trees (redbay, swamp bay, avocado, sassafras, pondspice, pondberry and others in the Lauraceae family) unless purchased from a registered nursery; and

· Use UF/IFAS- recommended methods to dispose of Lauraceae-family trees, if necessary.

Individuals who suspect their trees may be infected with laurel wilt or believe they have found a redbay ambrosia beetle are urged to contact the Department's Division of Plant Industry help line at 888-397-1517.

Since the 2002 U.S. arrival of the beetle, and the disease in 2004, laurel wilt has spread quickly throughout the southeastern U.S., destroying high numbers of bay trees. The disease has also infected a considerable number of residential avocado trees, primarily in North Florida.

In response to the risks associated with laurel wilt disease, FDACS formed a working group of industry members, agriculture agencies and local agriculture to review and chart an effective management strategy to mitigate the potential impact on Florida's avocado industry. Promising research projects are underway and considerable outreach is taking place to keep industry updated and the public informed. As part of this group, the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) has developed recommendations for disease treatment and management.

In March 2010, plant inspectors found the redbay ambrosia beetle, the insect that carries laurel wilt disease, during routine trapping efforts in Miami-Dade County.

To view management recommendations for homeowners, visit
http://trec.ifas.ufl.edu/doc/homeowner-recs-RAB-LW-5-16-10.pdf

If you would like to submit a plant or insect sample, visit
http://www.doacs.state.fl.us/pi/enpp/pathology/laurel_wilt_disease.html for sample submission instructions. For more information and to view a video on laurel wilt disease visit:
http://www.freshfromflorida.com/pi/enpp/pathology/laurel_wilt_disease.html

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