LAUREL WILT DISEASE
HARRINGTONIA LAURICOLA

Hosts and Range
Laurel wilt disease is caused by a fungus, Harringtonia lauricola, that is spread by the redbay ambrosia beetle, Xyleborus glabratus (Coleoptera: Curculionidae) and potentially native ambrosia beetles. The disease kills redbay, sassafras, swampbay, pondspice, pondberry, camphor, spicebush, avocado and other plants in the laurel family. The redbay ambrosia beetle is native to Asia. Since its initial detection in Georgia in 2002, this wilt disease has spread to 12 states, including Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, Arkansas, Tennessee and Kentucky.

Identification and Symptoms
The redbay ambrosia beetle adult is approximately 1/8-inch long and dark brown to black. The beetle carries fungal spores on its body and bores into the host tree creating galleries (tunnel-like paths). Beetles feed on the fungus, which grows in the galleries. The tree responds to the fungus by blocking water transport vessels, causing the tree to wilt. Infested sapwood will have black or purple streaking. Depending on the species, the foliage may wilt and remain on the tree (redbay and swampbay) or fall from the tree (sassafras). Although not always present, small, round entrance holes may be found on infested stems. Toothpick-like tubes of sawdust may protrude from entrance holes. A single beetle can vector enough fungus to kill a host tree within a month of the initial attack.

Firewood
The best method of controlling laurel wilt is to prevent the introduction of the disease. Since the beetle can live in cut wood, infested wood debris and firewood should not be moved long distances (greater than 50 miles). If traveling for recreational activities, we recommend leaving firewood at home and buying local firewood at your destination. There is currently no known method to stop the spread of laurel wilt disease completely. Once infestation in a tree is detected, the tree should be cut down as soon as possible and then chipped and burned on location. If burning is not possible, the tree should be cut down, chipped and left on site. A tarpaulin or other type of plastic covering can be placed over the chipped debris for an extended period of time to reduce the emergence and survival of the pest.

Additional Information
http://southernforesthealth.net/diseases/laurel-wilt

Toothpick tubes extrude from a redbay tree infested with the redbay ambrosia beetles.

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