

Austin Parks and Recreation Department

Barton Springs Pool Tree

September 19, 2023

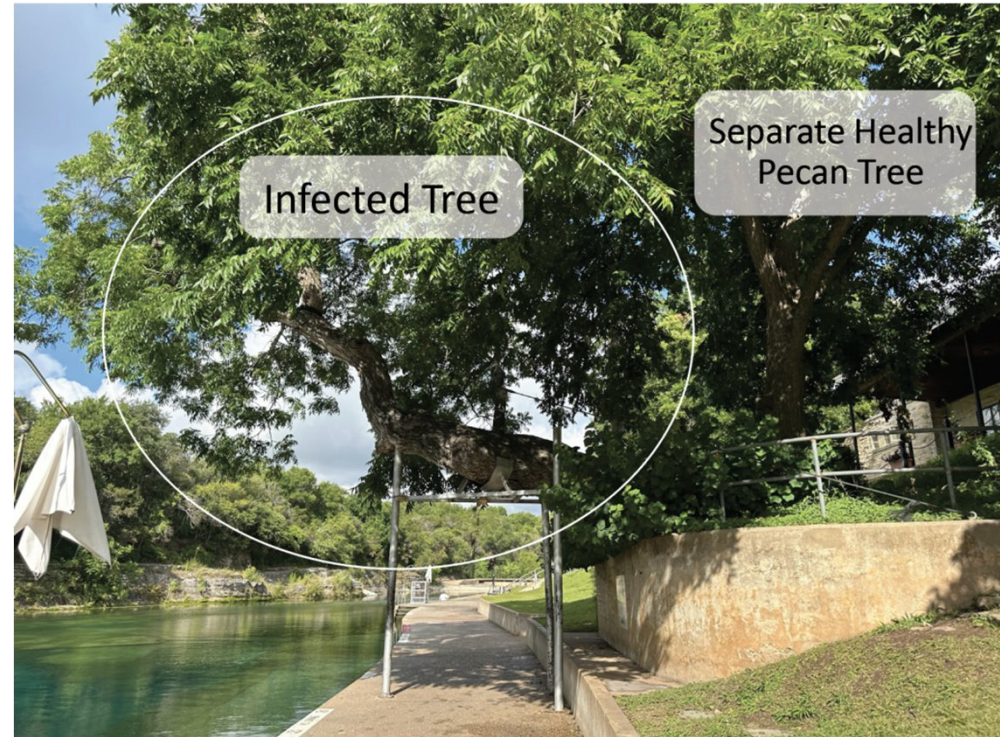
Review of Reports and communications from the community



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Austin Parks and Recreation Department

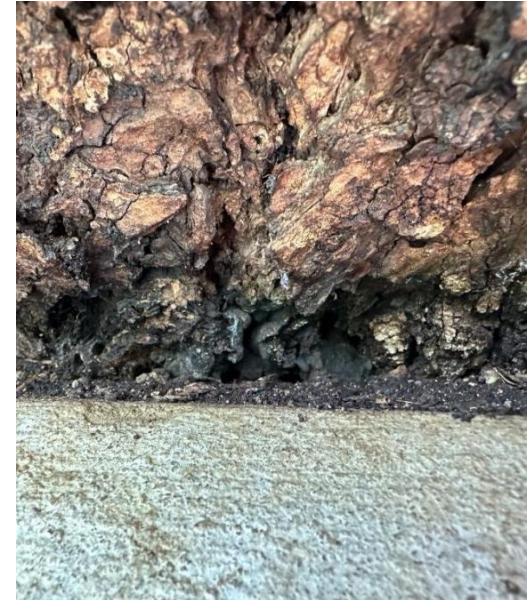
Background

- 46" diameter Pecan tree that has leaned over pool deck since the 1920's – over 100 years old
- Iconic tree affectionately named Flo that has been diagnosed with a fatal fungal infection
- Trunk is hollow – over 90% of the trunk at the base is concrete, numerous other visible trunk cavities
- Steel structures were added to support the tree
 - First steel posts were added in the 1950's
 - An additional steel support was added in 2009
 - 2 cables were added in 2009



Timeline

- July 6th – PARD staff noticed a fungal fruiting body at tree's base
 - Sample sent to Plant Diagnostic Lab at Texas A&M
- August 15th – Results confirmed brittle cinder fungus (*Kretzschmaria deusta*)
- August 15th - PARD contacted four independent ISA Certified Arborists for follow up inspections
- August 18th – access restricted for public safety; additional rope added for support



Brittle Cinder Fungus

- Wood-decay fungus that causes rapid decline and structural instability
 - Actively feeds on live tissue
 - Causes trees to fall over without warning, canopy looks fine prior to failure
 - The visible presence of the fungus is the warning sign
- The fungus can infect other trees
- There is no effective treatment for brittle cinder fungus
- This infection is on the portion of the trunk that is most compromised



Risks

- Risk of tree limbs falling, or the tree collapsing without warning
- Barricades and cones are in place to temporarily reduce risk
 - To do this, ADA access to the pool bathrooms is currently blocked by barricades
- Buoys in the pool restrict access
 - Currently affecting lap swimmers – safety concern



Arborist Report Summary

Company	Overall Risk Rating	Recommendation		Alternate options to mitigate risk	Residual risk with mitigation
Austin Tree Experts	"condition rating" Imminent Hazard	Remove tree within 30 days		None	n/a
Heritage Tree Care	Extreme	Remove tree		Restrict access, including area downstream in pool	Low*
Bartlett Tree Experts	High	Remove tree		Remove large branches	High
Arbor Vitae Tree Care	High	Remove tree		None	n/a



* = Please see the attachment for further clarification

Recommendation



Austin History Center, Austin Public Library C01818



- PARD Forestry staff and City Structural Engineers agree with the consulting arborists that the safety hazards are too great and tree removal is necessary
- PARD and the community love this tree and PARD is working to document its importance through collecting its stories
 - treestories@austintexas.gov
- PARD will host an event to honor the tree prior to its removal

Questions