Tyler County's Disappearing Dogwoods

Many dogwoods have disappeared from Tyler County's landscape, with fewer trees visible each year. Speaking to the Tyler County Forest Landowner Association on Saturday, March 21, Allen Smith explained that the decline is attributed to the anthracnose fungus that entered the US from Asia at Boston in the 1970s. Allen Smith is the East Texas Forest Health Coordinator with Texas A & M Forest Service.

The anthracnose fungus (*discula destructive)* starts with small tan or brown spots on lower leaves and branches and then moves upward. To reduce the chance of a fungus infection, cut away any sprouts at the base of the trunk. Appropriate fungicide applications can prevent the fungus from attacking a tree, but fungicides will not cure an infected tree. If a tree is infected, remove and destroy the infected twigs or branches promptly.

Native dogwood trees are susceptible to the fungus and the devastation in forests is up to 95%. When planting new seedlings/trees, consider fungus resistant varieties. Kousa dogwoods, or hybrids of Kousa and native trees, are the most readily available options. Other resistant varieties are tartarian and red osier – but these varieties are multi-stemmed shrubs, unlike dogwood trees. Traditionally, dogwood trees were planted in shaded, understory settings. However, Smith advised planting new dogwoods in full sun to reduce the chance of fungal infection.