

Gambel Oak

(*Quercus gambelii* — also called *Scrub Oak* or *Rocky Mountain Oak*)

A hardy, drought-tolerant native oak found throughout Colorado’s foothills and mountains. Gambel Oak commonly grows in **clonal thickets** and is extremely resilient, but it can experience issues with **oak leaf blister**, **leaf spot**, **gall wasps**, **Kermes scale**, **borers**, and **dieback from drought or fire suppression changes**.



Seasonal Pest & Disease Calendar

Icons: 🌸 Spring | ☀️ Summer | 🍂 Fall | ❄️ Winter

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Active Season</u>	<u>Icons</u>
Gall wasps	Insect	Spring–Summer	🌸☀️
Kermes scale	Insect/scale	Spring crawlers; visible year-round	🌸❄️
Leaf miners	Insect	Summer	☀️

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Type</u>	<u>Active Season</u>	<u>Icons</u>
Two-lined chestnut borer (rare)	Insect/borer	Summer	
Oak leaf blister	Fungus	Spring	
Anthracnose / leaf spot	Fungus	Spring–Summer	 
Drought stress / root decline	Abiotic	Summer–Fall	 

Pest & Disease Guide (Homeowner-Friendly)

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Common Symptoms</u>	<u>Treatment & Management</u>
Gall Wasps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Round, spiny, or irregular galls on leaves & stems • Cosmetic leaf distortion • Early leaf drop in heavy years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No treatment needed in most cases • Rake and remove fallen leaves • Maintain vigor with occasional deep watering
Kermes Scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sticky honeydew & sooty mold • Round brown bumps on twigs • Tip dieback if severe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treat crawler stage in late spring (pros) • Horticultural oil in late winter • Prune heavily infested twigs
Leaf Miners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tunnels or blotches in leaves • Browning patches • Leaves may look papery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually cosmetic • Remove infested leaves • Improve tree vigor

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Common Symptoms</u>	<u>Treatment & Management</u>
Two-Lined Chestnut Borer (Rare on Gambel)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Canopy thinning from upper crown • D-shaped exit holes • Progressive dieback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deep water during drought • Reduce stress (borers target weakened trees) • Preventive bark sprays if confirmed nearby
Oak Leaf Blister	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raised, bubble-like blisters • Distorted leaves in spring • Early leaf drop possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typically cosmetic • Improve airflow • Fungicide only in severe, repeated years
Anthracnose / Leaf Spot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Brown/black blotches • Early defoliation in wet springs • Twigs may die back slightly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rake leaves • Improve airflow; avoid overhead irrigation • Fungicide rarely needed
Drought Stress / Root Decline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaf scorch • Sparse canopy • Thinning or dieback during dry years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deep water every 3–4 weeks in summer • Maintain mulch ring • Avoid soil compaction and grading changes

When to Worry vs. When It's Cosmetic

● When to Worry (action recommended)

- Entire stems or sections of thicket dying back
- Heavy scale buildup with sooty mold and twig death
- Significant top-down dieback (possible borers)

- Rapid thinning during prolonged drought
- Structural instability in older single-stem specimens

Most serious issues arise from **drought stress**, which weakens Gambel Oak and allows pests to take hold.

● **Mostly Cosmetic (monitor only)**

- Galls on leaves or twigs (very common)
- Light leaf miner tunneling
- Minor leaf blister in wet springs
- Early leaf color change in hot/dry years
- Occasional tip dieback

Gambel Oak naturally sheds and regenerates foliage vigorously; most symptoms resolve with **seasonal cycles and basic watering**.