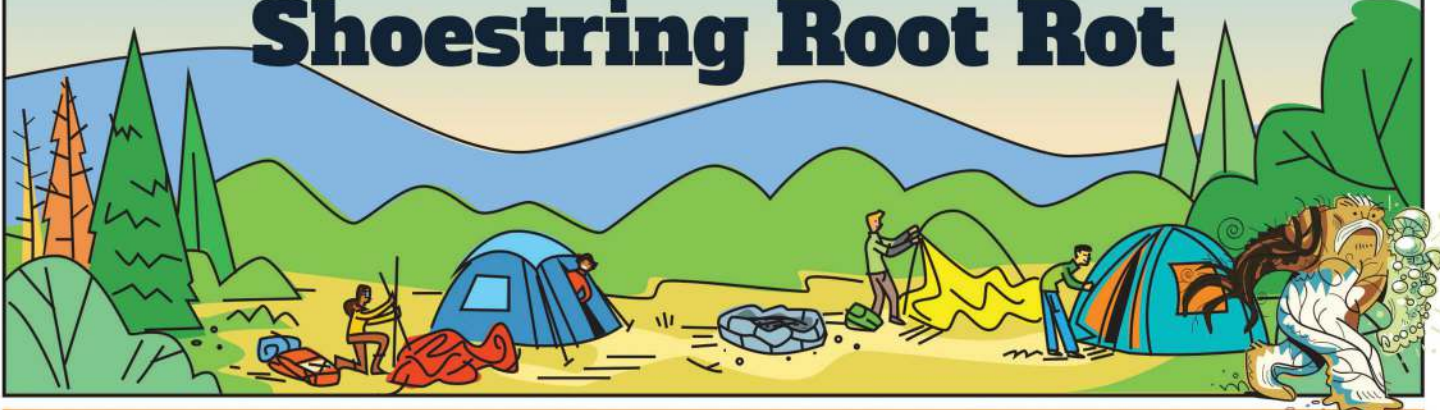


# Untangling the Mystery of Shoestring Root Rot



SUMMER BREAK has been great and the Plant Heroes (Aponi, Frankie, Laura and Nate) have been busy, but before starting the new school year they meet up for their annual camping trip reunion! After they pitch the tents, they start exploring the rest of the surrounding clearing and nearby forest...

Aponi discovers big clusters of honey-brown mushrooms growing and sprouting out of several old stumps.



Nate finds a few fallen trees nearby, some snapped near the base and others with roots pulled out of the ground.



Laura sees some trees around the edge of the clearing that are clearly dead but still standing.



Laura chips some bark off of one and, underneath, finds some freshly decayed wood that is unusually white. Curious, she uses her hatchet to chop out a few pieces and puts them in a plastic bag in her backpack.



Frankie is practicing his climbing skills on some trees just outside the clearing and notices that a few have some yellowing needles and dead tips.

**Over the campfire that evening...  
the Heroes trade stories about what each of them saw and where.**



Pretty quickly they see the pattern ... trees in the middle of the clearing have been dead the longest and that whatever killed them is **GROWING INTO THE FOREST!**

As they turn to look around, they notice the eerie glow coming from the top of Laura's backpack on the picnic table.



**THAT'S FOXFIRE!**



Nate explains to the others that he's heard lots of different kinds of fungi glow but that some of them are **REALLY BAD** for the forest and they need to try to find out what kind it is.

The next morning they take a closer look at some of the dead trees and, under the bark, find thick mats of dark stringy fibers. "UH-OH!" says Nate, "THAT LOOKS LIKE SHOESTRING ROOT ROT!"



The Heroes rush to the park headquarters and tell the local forester what they've seen. She runs some tests to be sure and then brings in excavators to remove all of the dead and dying trees. It's a mess, but at least they've stopped the fungus from spreading further into the woods!



After all the stumps are gone, the Heroes help restore the forest by replanting the area with trees that are resistant to the fungus.

