



Diagnosing Tree Health Problems

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This three-step process helps analyze tree health symptoms that can be caused by a number of factors including weather damage, infectious disease, insect feeding, chemical injury, site-related stresses and transplant shock.

Step 1. Examine the foliage

- ✓ Do the leaves have holes or ragged edges?
- ✓ Are the leaf margins brown?
- ✓ Are leaves abnormally discolored (yellow, light green, brown, black)?
- ✓ Are spots or bumps evident on the foliage?
- ✓ Have some or all of the leaves fallen prematurely?
- ✓ Are the leaves deformed (cupped, contorted, etc.)?
- ✓ Are insects or mites present on the leaves?

Step 2. Examine the trunk and branches

- ✓ Has the bark been injured by mowing equipment, vehicles, animals or girdling wires?
- ✓ Is there evidence of insect activity (holes, chewing marks, tunnels, etc.)?
- ✓ Are there any splits or cracks in the bark, and if so, on what side of the tree? Sunscald, frost and lightning are factors that can cause the bark to split or break apart.
- ✓ Has the tree been damaged by ice, hail or wind?
- ✓ Is the tree in an exposed, windy location?
- ✓ Are any wet, sticky substances oozing from the bark? This may indicate a bacterial infection in the wood.
- ✓ Is there evidence of decay or hollowing of the trunk?
- ✓ Are cankers evident on the branches or trunk?
- ✓ Is the tissue beneath the bark discolored (tan or brown)? This may indicate weather injury.

Step 3. Consider the roots

- ✓ Was the tree planted too deep?
- ✓ Has physical injury to the roots taken place, such as construction injury?
- ✓ Is there a new road or building nearby?
- ✓ Has there been any trenching to bury a phone or utility line nearby?
- ✓ Has soil grade or nearby terrain been changed?
- ✓ Is plastic or permeable material used around the tree?
- ✓ Has the soil been excessively wet or dry?
- ✓ Is the site poorly drained? Does water stand after rainfall?
- ✓ Have any chemicals been applied to the soil?
- ✓ Are de-icing salts used on roads nearby?
- ✓ Is there visible evidence of girdling roots?
- ✓ Is healthy turf growing over the tree roots?