

What Ails Your Tree?



from the **TREE CITY USA®
BULLETIN**

Trees, like people, all eventually develop a condition we do not welcome. Often it is something minor and may go away on its own, like a mild cold in humans. Other times, the problem may be more serious and need urgent care. No one can become an expert in diagnosis from reading a bulletin, but this issue will help you know what to look for and how to communicate with professionals who can tell you how to help your tree — if, in fact, it does need help.

ALSO LEARN:

- How to prevent pest problems
- The various kinds of diseases that affect trees
- The 10 most unwanted pests
- How to get help

Narrowing Down the Problem

When you know your tree is ailing, the next step is to determine the cause. Whether you try to do this yourself with the help of reference books or plan to contact an expert, the job will be easier if you can determine the general nature of the problem. Narrowing the possibilities into one of three categories will speed diagnosis and help arrive at recommendations for treatment.

Note: The best pest detectives work systematically. That is, they carefully examine the tree part by part — leaves, branches, trunk, and roots. They also consider nearby activities present and past, including any trenching, sidewalk or other construction work, use of herbicides, and anything else that might affect a tree. Speed of decline is also noted and whether only certain species of trees are affected, a group of different species in a limited area, or a single tree.

SYMPTOM: An injury by or a change in a tree's growth or appearance in response to a damaging agent. Examples are wilting leaves, discoloration, etc.

SIGN: The damaging agent (live insects or insect bodies) or a product produced by the pest (webs, mushrooms, entrance, holes, etc.).

Sign or Symptom

1. Chewed foliage or blossoms
2. Bleached, bronzed, silvered, flecked, or minced (lacey appearance) leaves
3. Distorted plant parts (swelling, twisting, cupping)
4. Dieback of twigs or shoots; holes in bark or roots; wood dust, frass, gum, or pitch issued from holes
5. Presence of insects or insect-related products:
 - Honeydew (sticky substance) and sooty mold
 - Fecal specks on leaves
 - Tents, webs, silken mats
 - Bags and cases
 - Spittle (white and foamy)
 - Cottony fibrous material
 - Pitch tubes (a mound of pitch with a hole in it)
 - Pitch or gum masses and sap flow

Possible Insect Causes

- Gypsy moths, tussock moths, other caterpillars; sawfly larvae, beetles, grasshoppers, walkingsticks
- Leafhoppers, lace bugs, plant bugs, thrips, aphids, psyllids, spider mites, leaf miners
- Thrips, aphids, gall makers, psyllids, eriophyd mites
- Asian longhorned beetles and other wood borers, bark beetles, scaled insects, gall makers, root-feeding beetle larvae
- Aphids, soft scales, leafhoppers, mealybugs, psyllids, whiteflies
- Lace bugs, thrips, some leaf beetles, plant bugs
- Tent caterpillars, webworms, leaf tiers
- Bagworms, case borers
- Spittlebugs
- Adelgids, mealybugs, flatids, some aphids, scales, whiteflies
- Southern pine beetle and some other bark beetles
- Larvae of certain moths, beetles, and midges



Arbor Day Foundation®
100 Arbor Avenue • Nebraska City, NE 68410