

Noticing when your tree has problems

(And what you can do about it)

By Mark James, Board Certified Master Arborist
Preservation Tree Care Inc 303-797-6143

The best way to notice when your tree has problems is to look at trees when they don't have problems. Get to know your trees and inspect them every so often. (I will explain how to inspect a tree later in this article). With our pets, if we notice they are not eating normally or as active as they usually are, we recognize that there may be something wrong. We either determine the problem and correct it, or we get professional help.

With trees, we should notice the coloring of the leaves, also their size and shape. Is new growth normal? Is something on the leaves, twigs or trunk? Any of these things could indicate that there may be a problem. Like everything else, the sooner a problem is noticed and treated the more likely the tree is to respond and recover. Arborists, receive calls all the time to help trees that are close to being dead because no one noticed until it was too late. Recognizing early on when your tree has a problem and getting professional help could mean the difference between losing your tree and maintaining its usefulness and beauty for many years to come.

So, you notice that something looks different about your tree perhaps the leaves are looking yellowish some have dropped off, they aren't the nice green color they should be. What do you do? If your child looked peaked and lacked energy or a pet wasn't eating and was lethargic what would you do? You might ask yourself what have they been doing the last twenty four hours, what have they eaten. You might backtrack and see if you can discover anything they could have gotten into that they should not have. This investigative process is very important in determining the problem and correcting it. Even if you decide to get professional help for your child or pet, most likely the doctor or veterinarian is going to ask you all of the questions you have just investigated.

Trees are not that much different - they just usually respond slower. You need to think back and ask yourself what has happened to this tree in the last month, the last six months or even a year? You need to inspect the tree and see what you can discover. When you call a professional arborist for help they will need to know this information in order to diagnose the problem and determine a corrective treatment.

So, you probably are getting the point that inspecting your trees is very important, and this is how you do it. First stand back and look at the tree as a whole, is there anything that stands out that does not look right? Take note. Now look at what is surrounding the tree, other trees, shrubs, flowers and grass. Do the other plants around the tree look ok or are they having problems? Take note. Now walk up close to the tree look at the soil, is it wet or dry do you see anything that does not look right? Take note. Look at the tree trunk, do you notice anything that looks out of place such as small holes, discoloring of the bark, things tied around it? Look at groups of branches then individual branches, look at areas of leaves then individual leaves. You may discover things in your inspection that you can correct yourself and your observations may be helpful to a professional arborist. One thing for sure is that noticing your trees when they are normal will help you take note of problems when your trees need help.

Certified Arborists are experienced professionals that can help you with tree problems, don't hesitate to call one. Another place you can get help diagnosing problems is the CSU Cooperative Extension in your county.