

# What's wrong with my tree?

## Tree diagnosis part III

Last week we addressed that two foundational steps are vital to beginning any tree diagnosis. Knowing the species of tree and what is normal growth or behavior for that type of tree. As stated previously, knowing those two items can greatly narrow and or eliminate possibilities. The next step is to describe what the problem is. For example, curled leaves, splitting bark, off color foliage, oozing liquid, odd growth, visible insects or webbing. The list is endless but be clear in the description of the abnormality. This again just narrows down the possibilities. The next critical step that is overlooked is the site history and analysis. It is easy to focus on the abnormality but miss specific clues on the property/site or even the history of the property/site. An example I have run into over the years has been splitting and cracking bark on a tree's limbs and branches but only on one side. Knowing it was on the wrong side for sun scald damage I asked about the history of the property and discovered the problem. The previous home had burned down and the damage to the trees limbs and trunk was from the fire. Forward to the present where now an entirely new structure stands leaving me puzzled until I had that key part of the site's history. Another example was a small ornamental tree that had died right off a client's deck. I checked the planting depth, looked for growth abnormalities, cut off limbs to check for vascular disease etc. Finally, after pulling back a bit to scratch my head in stupefaction, I spotted the hot tub on the deck. Even with the cover on it, I could smell the spa chemicals. After asking, I found out that they had recently drained the water in the hot tub right into the graveled landscape area near the tree by hose.

In closing, it is always important to know the site and the history if possible.