

# TOP 10 YARD TREE PROBLEMS



## Wounds & Decay

Homeowners commonly want to know how to handle wounds and decaying areas. Here are a few guidelines:

- Remove all the loose, decaying material back to solid wood using a screwdriver or similar tool.
- Spray the area with a pyrethroid or other insecticide labeled for wood-infesting insects.
- Do not use pruning paint or sealer, but leave the area exposed to open air.

There may be extreme situations or areas that hold water and warrant additional treatment. If a wound area covers more than about one-third of the trunk circumference, it may be best to remove the tree.



## Graft Compatibility

Several years ago a decline in many Bradford Pears was noticed in the Shreveport/Bossier area. Many trees were turning to their fall colors in midsummer and then shedding their leaves. After closer inspection, many of these trees were found to have been grafted and it appears that the root stock is growing slower than the scion or top material. Apparently many of these flowering pears that were planted around the same time are reaching a stage where the root simply is not keeping up with the rest of the tree. This has also been found in a few other species of landscape trees.



## Bacterial Leaf Scorch

This disease has become significant in our area. Several cases were reported in the Shreveport/Bossier areas during 2008. The confirmed cases were in live oaks, water oaks, post oaks, and southern red oaks. In other areas it has been reported in elm, sycamore, red maple, and red mulberry. This disease was undiagnosed in these species until the 1980's, so very little is known about it. Bacterial cells cause the problem by constricting the flow of sap (the tree's food) through xylem. Trees begin to show scorch in early to mid summer. It increases during late summer, apparently enhanced by hot and dry weather. The disease is transmitted by leafhoppers and spittle bugs.



## #10

### Oak Decline/Root Rot

The term “oak decline” is not reserved for any single disorder. Oak decline is often the result of a complex interaction of various environmental stresses and pests. Older trees will generally be more susceptible to oak decline. Root Rot is also commonly found in these stressed trees. Practices to promote good tree health can reduce the potential impacts of damage by oak decline. Some of these practices include:

- a. Pruning to reduce competition for moisture and nutrients and to favor the more vigorous section of the tree
- b. Mulching to reduce competition from sod and to reduce or alleviate soil compaction
- c. Fertilization to correct nutritional deficiencies
- d. Using insecticides as needed to reduce defoliation
- e. Watering

## #9

### Bad Pruning

Improper pruning is yet another common problem. Invariably after there is a bad ice storm in the area, homeowners want to prune back the large trees to reduce the chances of limbs falling through the house. However, improper pruning will result in weaker limbs than the ones that were pruned out.



## #8

### Yard Care

Often homeowners with good intentions cause problems for their trees while tending their lawns. One of the worst problems is the improper use of lawn chemicals. Many products have a combination of fertilizer and herbicide. An herbicide that may be good for the lawn because it kills unwanted weeds and releases the lawn grass may cause a problem when it gets into tree roots. If the product is used frequently, there's a chance for the herbicide material to build up just beneath the grass roots right where the tree's roots are located. Another common problem is lawn mower and weed trimmer damage. Trunk and root injuries not only stress and weaken trees, but also create entries for insects and diseases.



## #7

### Wildlife Damage



There are several forms of wildlife damage. Woodpeckers, sap suckers, squirrels, deer, rabbits, beavers, nutria, and domestic farm animals are some of the culprits. Even in urban areas, wildlife problems can be extensive. Over population of some of the animal species are creating many of these problems.

#6

## Species/Site Selection

A tree located on the wrong site or soil will always be unhealthy if it even survives. Pines and certain oaks on high pH soils are good examples. These trees will have a very yellow appearance. They are also more susceptible to other insect and disease problems. Heavy clay soils also need to be utilized by certain species for best results. Studying the site and understanding soil characteristics is the beginning step in planning for landscape trees. One good hint is to look at what is growing naturally nearby. Also, the homeowner should take a soil sample and use the results to select the appropriate trees to plant.



#5

## Ips Engraver Beetle & Other Pine Problems

Lots of pine trees are dying in our area right now. Many are infested with Ips Engraver Beetles, but there are other problems too. Some of these trees may be diseased with pitch canker or pine wilt. If the disease doesn't kill the tree, often it weakens it and then the beetles attack it and finish off the tree

#4

## Construction Damage/ Landscaping

Many times soil movement, compaction, mechanical injury and other damage resulting from construction are the culprits in the decline and death of yard trees. Usually after a new subdivision or housing development is established, several trees will die for the first four or five years. Many trees, especially oaks, have shallow root systems and adding, removing, or compacting the soil on the roots is detrimental. The tree often will not die immediately, but will gradually decline to the point of death over several years.



#3

## Leaf Fungal Diseases

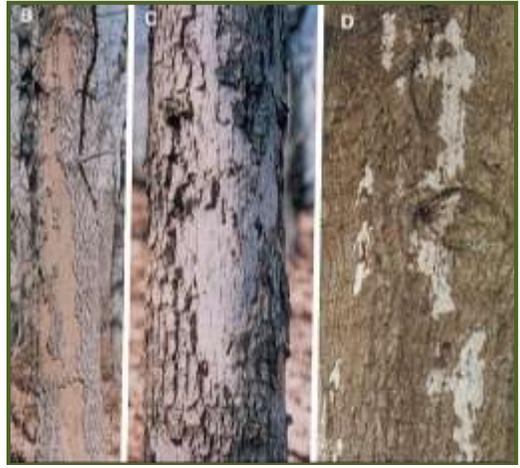


Anthrachnose, oak leaf blister and fireblight have been very prevalent lately. Our cool, rainy spring weather was very conducive for these leaf fungal diseases. Many ash, maple, oak and pears have been affected. Fireblight can be very serious and even kill pear trees, but most of the other leaf diseases usually run their course and the tree recovers.

**#2**

## **Drought and Heat**

Trees in the Ark-La-Tex are still feeling the effects of the 2010-11 drought. Some of the problems above are actually secondary factors attacking drought stressed trees. One such disease is hypoxylon which has killed and is still killing many oak trees and other hardwoods in the area. Drought, extreme heat and other environmental stressing conditions are often the primary culprits that result in the decline and death of trees. Marginal trees that have survived such conditions certainly cannot tolerate as much construction damage, insect infestations or other problems as healthy, vigorous trees.



**#1**

## **Crape Myrtle Bark Scale**

The Crape Myrtle Bark Scale first showed up in our area in 2011-12. Since then it has spread throughout our area. This invasive pest weakens crape myrtles, drastically reducing flower production and is usually followed by sooty mold covering the foliage and branches. Aggressive treatments are needed to control this pest.



Although these are some of the most common yard tree problems in this area, there are many other specific pests and problems. If you have a yard tree problem, contact your parish office of the LSU Agricultural Center, Cooperative Extension Service for information, advice and recommendations.

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