What's wrong with my tree?

Many people ask the question, "What's wrong with my tree?". This may be due to reduced growth and vigor, physical injury, disease, or insect damage. Trees are important as they provide many benefits, such as aesthetic appeal, shade, and environmental benefits. Trees are also valuable as a source of wood for construction and furniture. It is important to identify the problem early to prevent further damage.

Symptoms, Damage, and Causal Agents

Planting-related problems. Survival of newly planted trees depends upon the quality of plant material suited to the area, proper planting techniques and adequate postplanting care. Newly planted trees may suffer transplant shock as they adjust to the new environment. Early signs of transplant shock include sunburn or leaf scorch, or chlorosis (abnormally yellow) leaves may occur for 3-12 months after planting. Trees that are well adapted or properly cared for exhibit little or no damage.

Noninfectious (biotic) damage agents. All living things, including trees, are subject to damage from various agents such as temperature extremes, mineral and nutrient deficiencies, water supply, chemicals in the air, or mechanical damage such as wind, human activity, or animal activity. Noninfectious agents include herbicides, mites, nematodes, and mechanical injury. These agents often work together to weaken the tree, making it more susceptible to infection by insects, or bacteria in enter gain and cause further weakening or death.

Insects and Mechanical Injury. Insects and other mechanical forces can cause damage to trees and other plants. These forces can be divided into two main categories: mechanical force and biological force. Mechanical force includes wind, rain, snow, hail, and ice. Biological force includes herbicides, mites, nematodes, and certain animals such as birds, squirrels, and deer.

Examination and Diagnostic Assistance

When diagnosing the tree for various ailments, it is important to determine the cause and the extent of the problem. A thorough examination of the tree, including the trunk, branches, and foliage, can help identify the cause of the problem. The most common causes of tree problems include pest infestations, disease, and environmental stress.

Treatment Options

Treatment options vary depending on the cause of the problem. For pest infestations, chemical control can be used to reduce the population of the pest. For disease problems, preventative measures such as sanitation and pruning can help reduce the spread of disease. Environmental stress can be managed by providing adequate water and nutrients to the tree. In some cases, removing the tree may be necessary to prevent further damage.