

Buggy Trees Might Have More Than Pest Problems

by Rex A. Bastian, Ph.D.
Hendricksen the Care of Trees

It's still summer, but you've noticed your favorite tree already turning yellow. Appropriately alarmed, you wonder why. Upon close examination, you notice that some of the leaves appear eaten. You figure the tree has a pest problem and that eliminating the bugs will result in a healthy tree. You might be right. But you might not be.

Pest infestations or poor color could be a sign that a tree has more serious problems. Just as people are more likely to become ill if they are stressed, a tree is more susceptible to certain insects and disease when it is stressed. And there are a host of possible tree stressors; anything from too much or too little water, to soil compaction, to improper nutrient balance can diminish tree health.

That means the quick and obvious solution of spraying your tree to eliminate bugs might not solve the core problem. The situation is similar to treating a person who has high blood pressure, is overweight, smokes cigarettes, never exercises and eats fatty foods. Medication for the high blood pressure could help, but the person needs to address all the other factors to improve his or her overall health.

To further complicate matters of tree health, often what appears to be a pest problem is not. For most of the calls Hendricksen gets from people saying something is eating their trees, the real cause is something below ground or environmental.

A major change that is evident over the entire tree, such as a change in color or onset of leaf scorching, is a clue that your tree could have a below-ground problem. The change might seem to appear overnight, since once the root system begins to malfunction, the rest of the tree can quickly suffer the effects.

Whether it's a pest problem, a root problem or a combination of several factors, the remedy — just like with people — often involves more than a quick fix. It takes a "lifestyle" change. Whereas people need to exercise, eat right, get enough rest and so on, trees need mulch, adequate water and nutrients, proper soil conditions and room to grow.

Although people often respond quickly to medical treatment, trees might take years. How committed a superintendent is to saving a tree is also a factor. For instance, the remedy might require removing turf from under the tree canopy and replacing it with mulch. If the superintendent does not want to comply, the effectiveness of the overall treatment will decrease. Also, sometimes a tree is simply "over the hill". In this case, appropriate care might prolong its life somewhat, but the superintendent would need to consider if the effort would be worth the cost.

Early diagnosis with trees is just as important as with humans — and more difficult, since an arborist can't administer a battery of tests like a physician can. So if you suspect a tree has a problem, don't procrastinate. Call a professional consulting arborist as soon as possible.

Even more important, use a preventive approach: Begin a total tree care program before your trees develop problems.

K & K WELL DRILLING

FAST EMERGENCY PUMP SERVICE

One of The Midwest's Largest Fleets of Rigs & Service Trucks

Submersible & Jet pumps Complete Sales & Service
• Residential • Agricultural
• Industrial • Municipal

SERVICE ON ALL MAKES & MODELS

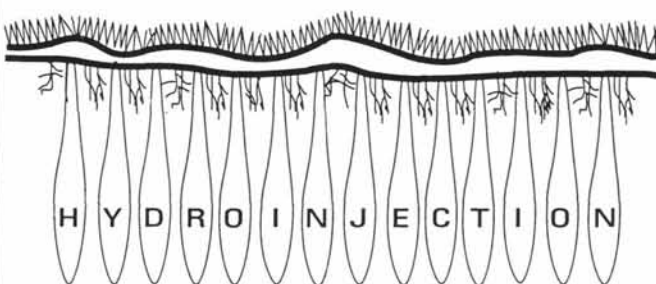
ASK ABOUT OUR 5 YEAR CONDITIONAL GUARANTEE



708-879-1700
BATAVIA

708-553-5111
YORKVILLE

708-479-5484
MOKENA




HYDROINJECTION

**Greens • Tees • Problem Areas
Fairways • Roughs**

No job too big or too small. Use us on a regular basis or only as needed.

— Satisfaction Guaranteed —

TURF Concepts
Specializing in fine turf cultivation



(708) 983-5550