



College of Agricultural, Consumer
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Cooperative Extension Service
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Water Stressed Trees

More information might help with a diagnosis, as well as photos. Please respond with as much detail as possible.

(The following questions are designed for tree diagnoses, but can be adapted for other landscape plants.)

- 1) How old is the tree? (newly planted? More than 5 years old?)**
 - a. Who planted it? Was any burlap or wire left on the root ball? Were roots circling from having been grown in a container for too long at the time of planting?***
 - b. What did it look like last year? Healthy? Some browning? Slow growth?***
 - c. How big is the trunk? (I like to size based on pizza sizes. Is it as big around as a 12" pizza? What size?)***
- 2) What species of tree?**
- 3) How are the trees currently watered?**
 - a. Frequency***
 - b. Method (sprinkler, hose, drip, etc.)***
 - c. length of time water is applied _____ and does water reach down to 2-3 feet into the soil profile? _____***
 - d. and Where is water applied? (at the base of the trunk? Or out at the dripline? Entire root zone, meaning under canopy and out beyond the dripline.)***
 - e. What's the soil type? (Generally speaking, is it sandy? Or more clay?)***
 - f. Does soil dry slightly between waterings? (Roots need 2 things to grow in our soils: water and oxygen)***
 - g. Is there any barrier (like weed fabric), under the tree canopy or out beyond the canopy dripline that prevents water and air from getting to the soil?***



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- 4) *Has any fertilizer been applied in the past year? Fertilizer alone does not usually hurt a whole tree, but it can cause severely burned leaves. Combined with inadequate water, fertilizer applied in excess can kill a plant.***

- 5) *Are there other plants in the landscape? Are they showing any signs of stress?***

- 6) *What's the hardscape situation? Is there rock mulch? Bare ground? Nearby wall?***

- 7) *Has anything changed in the landscape in the past year (for example, trenching, sidewalk removal or installation, irrigation methods, etc.)?***

- 8) *If there is branch dieback: Are the branches dead and stiff or did the leaves just brown and fall off? Try bending some of the branches. If they are stiff, they've likely died back a bit. Can you tell how far back they died? If they're pliable, they're still alive and might generate a new flush of growth if watered well.***

Photos will be helpful with diagnosis too. If you can, please share photos of the: 1) whole tree, including base of the trunk and branch tips, 2) surrounding landscape so we can see other plants in the yard, groundcover, hardscapes, etc..., 3) trunk from a few angles (does the Southwest side of the trunk look particularly damaged in any way?), 4) symptomatic leaves and branches.