

Over the past few weeks, we have been getting tons of calls relating to trees and shrubs losing their leaves and, in most cases, it is the effects of the hot, dry weather that we are having. Drought is the lack of water for a period of time. Even though you may be seeing some of the issues now; damage can continue to show up for several years.



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Some visible symptoms in deciduous trees are curling, bending, rolling, scorching (marginal browning), chlorosis, and shedding. In conifers, drought may cause yellowing and browning of needle tips.

As drought intensifies, its harmful effects may be expressed in dieback of twigs and branches in tree crowns. Leaves in the top-most branch ends generate the lowest water potentials, and decline and die. Among the important adaptations for minimizing drought damage in tree crowns are: shedding of leaves; production of small or fewer leaves.

Premature shedding of leaves can be induced by drought. The loss of leaves during drought can involve either the dropping of leaves or they may wither and turn brown on the tree. Yellow poplar (*Liriodendron*) is notorious for shedding many leaves during summer droughts, sycamore (*Platanus*) sheds some leaves, and buckeye (*Aesculus*) may shed all of its leaves as drought continues. On the other hand, leaves of dogwood (*Cornus*) usually wilt and die rather than abscise.



You may even have some temporary wilting and leaves are visibly drooping during the day. During long periods of dry soil, temporary wilting grades into permanent wilting. Permanently wilted trees do not recover at night. Permanently wilted trees recover only when additional water is added to the soil. Prolonged permanent wilting kills trees.

Finally, pests tend to move into trees because they (trees) have a poorer response to pest attack. Unhealthy trees are more prone to pest problems and drought creates unhealthy trees. Attacks on trees by boring insects that live in the inner bark and outer wood can be more severe in dry years than in years when little water stress develops. So, what can you do? Water your trees regularly and especially in drought conditions.

If you were so fortunate to get some of the recent rains, it should help the tree recover some for the upcoming winter. You may continue to see some early leaves dropping but the water is essential to the tree overall help.

To find out more information, please call the Extension Service at 898-7710 or visit our office 315 John R. Rice Blvd. in Murfreesboro. The Extension Program offers it programs to all persons regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability and is an Equal Opportunity Employer.