

Problem: Leaf Drop on Trees



Description:

In some years we have trees that leaf out and then lose leaves through a general thinning. The cause in most of these cases seems to be stress-related. This often occurs when we make the transition from cool spring weather to hot, dry summer weather. That stress can be due to a number of causes including:

- Too much water. Roots need oxygen just as much as they need water. Flooding can damage root systems.
- Too little water. Trees will often compensate for lack of water by dropping leaves that it can no longer support with the available water supply.
- Disease. Some diseases such as anthracnose or cedar-apple rust can result in a general thinning or may be severe enough to cause the tree to lose all its leaves.

Recommendations: Trees that are losing leaves through a general thinning should be fine. If the thinning is severe enough, the tree will throw out a new set of leaves from dormant buds. This will also happen if a tree loses all its leaves due to disease. As long as it is early in the growing season, the tree has plenty of time to make the energy it needs before leaf drop in the fall.

References:

[Horticulture 2018 Newsletter, No. 29, July 24, 2018](#), "Trees Losing Leaves"

Last Update: 1/18/2022

Brand names appearing in this publication are for product identification purposes only. No endorsement is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products not mentioned.

“Knowledge for Life”

Kansas State University Agricultural Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service