

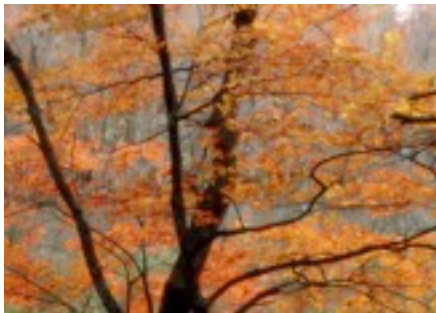


Early Fall Color Could Be Sign of Tree Distress

In many part of North America, people will soon enjoy one of nature's finest shows - fall foliage. Color-changing leaves make for a beautiful display, but early changes in leaf color can be a sign that your tree is stressed and is susceptible to insect and disease attack.

If the leaves on your trees seem to have gotten a jump-start on fall compared with those on similar trees in the area, you might want to consult a professional arborist who can identify any problems and offer solutions.

Premature colors can be an indication that a tree isn't vigorous enough to withstand insects and disease organisms that may attack it.



Occasionally, only one or two limbs of the tree will show premature fall color. This could be a sign of a disease at work weakening only infected limbs. Bill Foery of Black Diamond Tree Service, Inc. suggests removing dead, dying, and storm damaged branches, along with structural pruning, to restore a tree's vigor.

The more common situation is for the entire tree to exhibit premature fall coloration, a phenomenon usually linked to root-related stress. Trees respond to these stresses by trying to curtail their above-ground

growth. In southern Vermont and the Deerfield Valley, this root stress is often caused by the rocky soil or ledge which limits root growth. Again, proper pruning, along with selective canopy reduction can help.

Leaves can be thought of as small factories containing raw materials, products and by-products, all in chemical form and some with color. As the leaf is "abandoned" by the tree, the green chlorophyll - the dominant chemical found in most leaves - is broken down and "recycled," leaving behind other-colored chemicals. Supply lines to the leaves also become clogged. If the major chemical remaining in the abandoned leaf is red, the leaf turns red. If it's yellow, the leaf turns yellow, and so on. The yearly variation in color intensity is due to varying weather conditions, which can affect the balance of chemicals and their composition on the leaves. Differing amounts of rainfall, sunlight, temperature, humidity and other factors may have an effect on how bright, how quickly and how long the "leafpeeping" season will be in any given year.



A professional arborist can assess your landscape and work with you to determine the best course of action. Contact the Tree Care Industry Association (TCIA), a 71-year old public and professional resource on trees and arboriculture. It has 2,000 member companies who recognize stringent safety and performance standards and who are required to carry liability insurance. Locally, Black Diamond Tree Service is a member of TCIA and has been serving the Deerfield Valley since 1994.