



May 2024

Environmental Message

## Spring: A Time for New Growth and Foliar Diseases

As Utility Arborists the spring and summer months can be the busiest times for us. There is new growth on the trees, herbicide season is about to kick off fully, the days are longer and between summer thunderstorms and tropical storms we can have our hands full juggling the many responsibilities our of day-to-day jobs. One thing that also occurs during this time of year that we may not realize is fungal infections and foliar diseases are starting to infect trees.

During the spring, new growth emerges and the leaves are still young and unprotected. Also, as the saying goes April showers brings May flowers, those April showers create the perfect environment for these foliar diseases to thrive. Some diseases even need two completely different species to complete their life cycle! This is the time when foliar diseases settle into the leaves. On the residential/commercial side of the Arboriculture business spring means fungicides are being applied to this new growth to prevent these diseases from infecting the trees and shrubs. With good timing these applications can provide season long coverage from these diseases.

What if a property owner does not protect their trees and shrubs from these diseases? Generally speaking, the leaves will have irregular spots on them, areas of the leaves that will fall out, late summer leaf drop and if re-infection occurs year over year a general decline of tree health is to be expected. With names like Apple Scab, Rust, Anthracnose, little leaf disease, leaf blister many different trees can be infected with one or more of these diseases. Pines, spruces and firs do not escape foliar diseases as their new growth can be infected as well.

As Utility Vegetation Managers we perform our essential services on millions of trees each year. But it is almost a guarantee that at some point our practices will be brought into question about causing harm to the trees. With sound practices our work keeps modern life moving and a part of that is knowing how trees work. Utility Vegetation Managers do not necessarily need to know every disease and insect that impacts every single tree, but a good practitioner should be familiar with how to find that information and with a bit of research identify that a foliar disease was the cause of the early defoliation, not our sound pruning practices.

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