

Tree Decline

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Tree decline is a condition in which no single portion (branches, trunk or roots) of a tree is heavily damaged, but the tree is not healthy and growing well. The tree has a generally "sickly" appearance that can't be attributed to specific damage (broken branches, girdling, etc) or to insect or disease problems.





Portions of the tree visibly




affected by decline:

Branches
Leaves
Trunk
Roots




Branch characteristics of decline

-  Stunted growth
-  Branches dying from the ends without being broken, twisted or cracked by a storm



Leaf characteristics

-  Defoliation - total or partial loss of leaves
-  Odd coloring of leaves, particularly yellowing or browning
-  Misshapen leaves

Trunk characteristics

-  Abnormal amounts of flaking bark
-  Sprouts coming from the base of the tree, root sprouts
-  Trunk rot - large fungus growing near the base of the tree

Root characteristics

-  Broken, cut or crushed roots
-  Fetid odor from root rot

Tree decline is particularly an issue with subtle damage done to individual portions of a tree that when added together severely limit a tree's health and structural soundness.

Example tornado damaged tree:

- Small portion (10-15%) of its branches broken
- Slight twist in the trunk that self-corrects
- Small portion (10-15%) of the roots that failed

Any of these problems alone would be considered minor. Combining them on a single tree means almost 50% of the tree is damaged. The tree will be stressed and stunted, at best.

Complications:

- Reduced ability to photosynthesize
- Reduced water uptake
- Small, malformed and discolored leaves
- Weaker trunk structure

All of these manifestations combine as hallmarks of tree decline and necessitate careful monitoring of your tree through the first 3-4 years following the storm.

Tree decline is a situation that often requires professional assistance from an arborist or urban forester. The subtlety of tree decline can make diagnosing and mitigating the damage difficult without extensive training, and a professional's experience will be of benefit to your tree. See [Do-It-Yourself vs. Hiring a Professional](#) and [Who Do I Contact](#).

[Determining the extent of damage](#)

will take you through the process of evaluating the damage to your tree.



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