What's Wrong with My… Tree?

Bill Swantner, Bexar County Master Gardener

Tree issues are among the more difficult things for a Master Gardener to diagnose because there are so many variables - so many questions that need to be asked to pinpoint the problem, many of which the homeowner cannot answer.

In these cases, a picture is worth a thousand words. Here are some trees with issues. See if you can figure them out, with just the picture. What additional questions would you want to ask the homeowner to help diagnose the issue? Issues are identified at the end of the article.

A

B

C

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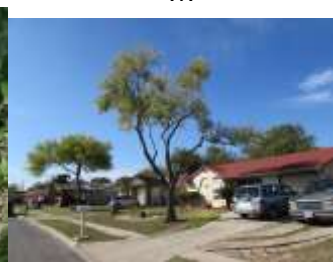
P



Q

Answers to pictures:

A. *The tree grew into the fencing that was meant to protect it*
B. *Piling mulch up around tree trunk will keep bark moist and provide pests and diseases easy entry to the tree*
C. *These live oak trees are planted too close together. Eventually, this may become a problem.*
D. *The roots that provide this live oak with water and nutrients are 5-6 feet under base materials*
E. *Transporting trees from the nursery standing up in the bed of the truck allows the wind to strip the leaves of moisture during the ride home*
F. *This is crape myrtle bark scale*
G. *This is a fungus growing in the heartwood of a "native" tree. No idea how it was caused.*
H. *Improper trimming of crepe myrtle*
I. *The staking rope was not removed and is now cutting into the bark of the tree*
J. *The ivy growing into bark is not healthy for the tree as it provides a moist habitat for pests and diseases to attack the tree*
K. *This is an open wound to a live oak, unpainted and growing in moderate temperatures. This wound is a good entry point for the beetle that carries oak wilt.*
L. *Another example of someone forgetting to remove the stake that was used to provide stability*
M. *Installation of irrigation system is cutting tree roots*
N. *This is a lightning strike on a tree*
O. *This is bacterial leaf scorch*
P. *This is damage from the improper use of a weedeater*
Q. *Improper pruning of oak into "lion's tail"*

Once an issue is diagnosed, it is much easier to research potential recommendations.

Photo credits:
Picture N is from https://www.w8ji.com/images/Lightning/IMG_1003.JPG
Picture O is from (https://plantclinic.tamu.edu/calendar2019/oleanderxylella/bacterial-leaf-scorch-on-oaks/)
All other pictures are by Bill Swantner, BCMG