



How to Help Your Tree After Early Growing Season Defoliation



As trees awaken from winter dormancy each spring, they use energy stored from the previous year to produce leaves,. It takes a lot of energy to accomplish this phase of tree growth. This energy begins to be replaced as leaves unfurl and the process of photosynthesis (converting sunlight to energy) begins.

It is at this critical time that a tree's buds, and the leaves contained in the buds are most vulnerable to injury, and also most likely when leaf defoliators will attack. Tree defoliation which occurs early in the spring causes serious stress to trees as they will grow new leaves ("re-foliate"), if they have enough energy and water to do so. This process weakens the tree further.

Most healthy trees can tolerate defoliations and should be allowed at least one more growing season to determine if they can survive. So, just because your tree may have lost all its leaves this year, we recommend that you do not cut it down right away unless it may become a safety hazard.

If a tree is totally defoliated watering is recommended to help the tree to replenish its energy resource. However too much water is also not good at this time so during wet periods monitor the rainfall so as to not over water your tree. One inch of rainfall/watering per week is sufficient.

Fertilization is not recommended after mid May as this may cause the tree to produce a flush of late growth that may be damaged by early fall frosts because the leaves have not had time to harden off. If you are fertilizing use a quick release fertilizer high in nitrogen.