

# Online Diagnostics & Recommendations for Tree Health

Final Progress Report: July 2010

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**Project Summary:** Over the years extension has responded to questions about tree problems through the Yard and Garden Clinic, several phone lines, county educators and UMN volunteers. As Extension has evolved, many of these resources have been discontinued. In addition, people are looking more to the internet for immediate answers to their questions. Despite all of these changes home owners, gardeners, woodlot owners, and tree care professionals still have questions and concerns about how to properly care for their trees. This proposal brings together educators with expertise in tree care from a wide variety of areas to form the UMN Extension Tree Care Team. Our highest priority is to create an online tool to diagnose insect, disease and abiotic tree problems. The team will identify 15-20 trees commonly grown in Minnesota. For each tree a simple diagnostic key will be created including photos and descriptive phrases of common problems. The tool will be built following the format of the existing ‘What’s wrong with my plant?’ model and will be easy to use by everyone from home gardeners to tree care professionals. Once a diagnosis is reached, the tool will direct the user to other online information about management of the problem. With this project the UMN Extension Tree Care Team hopes to reach a wide range of audiences concerned about tree health.

## **Project Status to Date:**

Diagnostic keys for insect, disease and abiotic problems of apple, ash, basswood/linden, birch, crabapple, elm, hackberry, honeylocust, maple, oak, poplar/cottonwood, prunus, and spruce have all been created and posted online. Keys for pest problems of mountain ash, red cedar/juniper, yew, and larch will be posted by the end of August 2010.

The project team has received emails from the Wisconsin department of natural resources and the Minnesota tree care advisor volunteers expressing appreciation of the project. Both groups look forward to using the tool as part of their work with landowners. WIDNR has promised to link their webpage to the tree diagnostic webpage when the work is completed in June 2010. One homeowner reported that they were able to save 2 oak trees on their property from oak wilt because they were able to diagnose the problem with the online tool and take action quickly.

The group has created a simple online survey to determine how successfully the tool is working for online users. This survey will be linked to every pest page in the diagnostic tool.