

Wound dressings. Primarily cosmetic, wound dressings should not be used to hasten callus formation or prevent decay. Some wound dressings, like asphalt emulsion, may speed up decay by trapping moisture. Homemade and commercial preparations containing copper are toxic to living tissues and may slow callus formation.

Treating cavities. A hollow area or cavity within the tree can result as decay progresses (fig. 3). The cavity forms because as the tree grows it surrounds the decayed wood with healthy wood. The healthy heartwood begins to decay in a vertical column; new wood growing around the wound is resistant to the decay. Thus, while the side walls remain sound, the upper and lower surfaces rot. Water often fills these cavities. Do not bore a hole to drain the cavity, as this action may permit decay to spread

to healthy wood. Water may be siphoned out with a turkey baster. A piece of sheet metal may be used to cover the cavity entrance to prevent further moisture accumulation.

Of the commercial cavity-filling materials available, none will deter decay. In some cases, however, they may be used in cavities to provide a base for callus growth. In most cases, tree cavities should not be filled.

When dealing with cavities, the best recommendation is to do everything possible to improve tree vigor so that new wood grows faster than the decay causing the cavity.

Treating sunburn or scald. When a tree has been sunburned, the bark will blister, crack, dry, and peel away from the wood. These wound symptoms are caused by direct exposure to the sun, and

are especially serious if the wound is on the south to west side of the limb or trunk. Painting the wounded area with white latex (water base) paint will speed callus formation by reflecting heat. This is particularly important during cold winter months when the sun is low. In deciduous trees, most sunburn occurs at that time because there is no foliage to protect the bark.

Maintaining Your Trees

Avoid all unnecessary tree wounds. Make proper pruning cuts. Avoid topping trees—serious branch decay, especially in mature shade trees, often results from topping.

Remove a badly decayed tree before it becomes a hazard. You may want to contact a certified arborist to evaluate the structural stability of your tree. If a tree has some decay, be sure the tree is otherwise vigorous. Maintain all your trees through proper fertilization, irrigation, pruning, and pest control when needed.

This publication was formerly identified as *Treating Tree Wounds*, Leaflet 21181. This is a major revision of that publication.

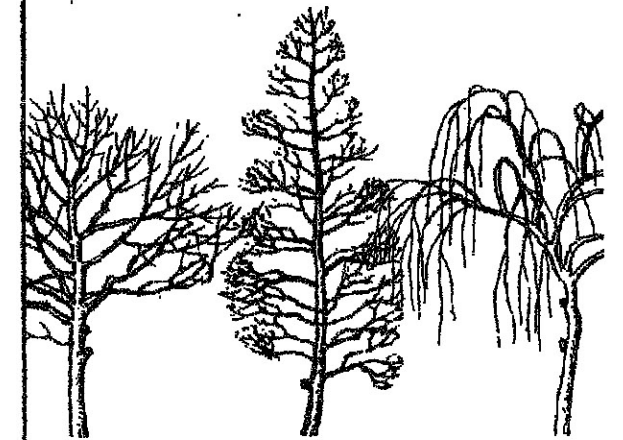
Additional publications about landscape trees are listed in a catalog, available free, from Publications, Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources, University of California, 6701 San Pablo Avenue, Oakland, California 94608-1239.

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Landscape Trees: Their Wounds and Treatment



When trees are wounded, healthy wood is exposed to microscopic organisms—primarily bacteria and fungi—which may infect and eventually decay wood. While all tree species may be vulnerable to wound diseases and decay, susceptibility varies. Decay weakens branches, trunks, and roots; eventually, it may reduce sound trees to unsightly trees.

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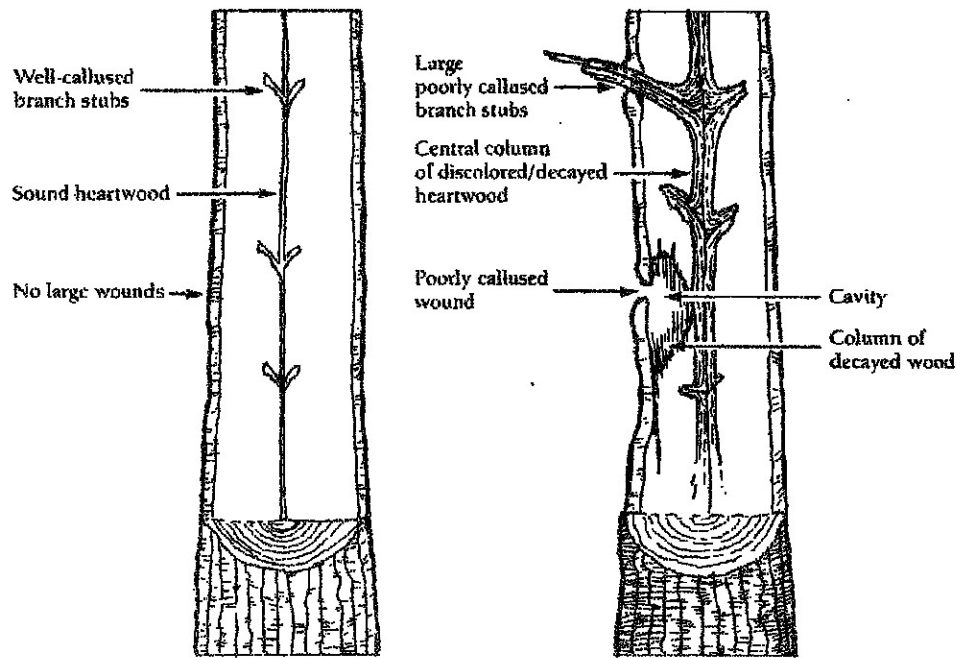


Figure 3. Healthy, well-callused tree is left; decaying, poorly callused tree is right.