Systematic Approach to Diagnosing Plant Damage

Define the Problem

1. Identification—Establish what the "normal" plant would look like at this time of year. Describe the "abnormality" by symptoms and signs.
2. Examine the Plant and Surroundings—Determine the primary problem and part of the plant where initial damage occurred.

Look for Patterns

1. Non-uniform damage—Is the damage scattered without pattern (indicative of living factors: pathogens, insects, etc.)?
2. Uniform damage—Is the damage uniform over a large area, such as patterns on several plant species or on individual plants indicates non-living factors (mechanical, physical or chemical factors)?

Delineate Time Development of Damage Pattern

1. Progressive spread—The movement of damage on a plant, onto other plants or over an area indicates damage caused by living organisms.
2. Defined damage—Damage that does not spread to other plants but creates a clear line of demarcation indicates non-living damaging factors.

For more information you may visit DIAGNOSING PLANT PROBLEMS on the Idaho Landscape and Gardening Web site.