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## **WHY DON'T MY TREES HAVE GOOD FALL COLOR??**

Sugars and weather are the main reason why trees some years have brilliant fall foliage and other years much less color.

The best color development seems to take place when a dry summer is followed by crisp, cool (not cold) autumn nights. Weather patterns during the fall have the greatest impact, both in controlling color change and in enhancing our view of the colors.

Warm days followed by gradual cooler nights bring the best color. The sunny days encourage photosynthesis and, thus, sugar accumulation in the leaves. As fall progresses, each leaf develops an abscission layer at the base of the petiole, or leaf stem, that prevents these sugars from being transported down the trunk to the roots for storage. This high sugar content in the leaves produces more intense colors. Cloudy days and warm nights prevent some of the sugar accumulation and results in less vibrant colors.

Weather during other parts of the growing season can also have an effect. Heavy rains in the early spring or hot, dry weather during the summer can both have a deleterious effect on fall color.

The length of time a tree maintains fall color also depends on weather. Reds, yellows and oranges are short-lived when trees undergo frosts and freezes.

For our area, the summer days may sometimes be too hot for too long, the summer rains do not allow trees to become slowly stressed, and the fall comes suddenly, rather than gradually.

The only thing we can do is keep our trees as healthy as possible by giving adequate water and fertilizer at the right times. We will have to take the fall color that Mother Nature gives us and really enjoy it when it is spectacular.

This information comes from Jeff Schalau at the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension Yavapai County Office, and the Clemson Cooperative Extension Office.

