

Algae, Lichens, and Moss

[Algae](#), [lichens](#), and [moss](#) (ALM) are **non-parasitic** organisms that grow on many kinds of surfaces, including bark, soil, and rocks. Since they are non-parasitic, ALM do **not** harm trees on which they grow.

However, the presence of ALM with other accompanying symptoms *can* be an indicator of poor tree health. ALM are rarely found on a healthy, fast-growing tree since it is frequently shedding bark as it grows. If excessive ALM are present, the tree may be suffering from **reduced vigor**. ALM also need sunlight for photosynthesis to make their own food. If large numbers of ALM are present, **pathological leaf loss and dieback** may be allowing too much sunlight into the tree's interior. In both cases, further investigation is warranted.

ALM can be controlled to some extent by improving air circulation to reduce available moisture. Typically, this is accomplished with proper [pruning](#) practices. ALM can also be removed by hand or they can power-washed off during specific times of the year. However, if the ALM are a result of poor underlying health, the cause(s) must be determined and treated to reduce the conditions that permitted the ALM to flourish in the first place.

