

Using Tree Diagrams One way to visualize a problem is a *tree diagram* (Figure 3). This approach is particularly useful for connecting causes of problems with proposed solutions. Such a diagram distinguishes between root and immediate causes, and between prevention and treatment solutions. The problem and its possible solutions are tied to underlying basic or grounding principles. (See the inside back cover of your textbook for a summary of such principles.)

Many environmental problems have overlapping root causes and solutions, especially prevention solutions. The implication is that some actions will help solve not just one but many problems. Indeed, one of the basic principles of environmental science is that everything is connected, and that because of these connections we cannot solve environmental problems in isolation. A tree diagram helps us see connections between underlying principles (the soil), causes (roots and base of the tree), and solutions (leaves on the deciduous tree). Some of the proposed solutions may not be workable or practical and, when reevaluated, can be shed like leaves falling from a deciduous tree.