



Hurricanes & Trees

Basic Tree Care After a Storm

The first impulse of the homeowner after a major storm is to hurry up and clean up the mess. Making hasty decisions may result in removing trees that could have been saved.

Doing what's right in the first few days after trees have been damaged can make the difference between saving your tree or losing your tree unnecessarily.

Here are a few simple rules to follow for tree care after a storm:

1. Don't try to do it all yourself. If large limbs are broken or hanging, or if high climbing or overhead chainsaw work is needed, let a professional arborist do it.

2. Take safety precautions. Look up and down the tree. Be alert for downed power lines and dangerous hanging branches. Stay away from any downed utility lines – low voltage telephone or cable lines and even fence wires can become electrically charged when there are fallen or broken electrical lines nearby.

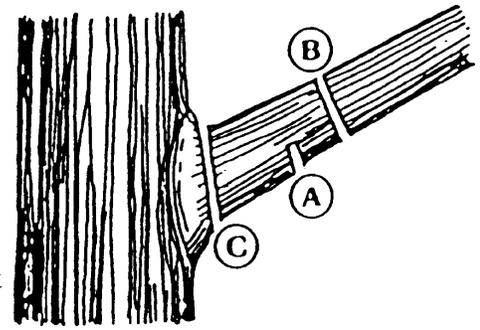
3. Remove any broken branches still attached to the tree.

Removing the jagged remains of broken limbs is the most common repair that property owners can make after a storm. If done properly, it will minimize the risk of decay entering the wound. Smaller branches should be pruned at the point where they join larger ones. Large branches that are broken

should be cut back to the trunk or a main limb.

FOLLOW THE PRUNING GUIDELINES.

Because of its weight a large branch can tear loose during pruning, stripping the bark and creating jagged edges that invite insects and disease. That won't happen if you follow these steps:

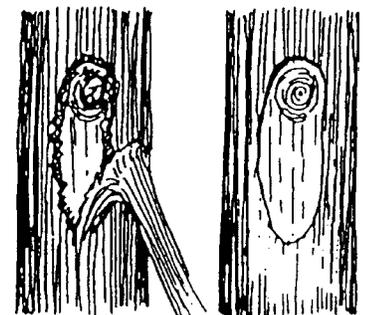


- A.** Make a partial cut from beneath, at a point several inches away from the trunk.
- B.** Make a second cut from above several inches out from the first cut, to allow the limb to fall safely.
- C.** Complete the job with a final cut just outside the branch collar, the raised area that surrounds the branch where it joins the trunk.

4. Repair Torn Bark. To improve the tree's appearance and eliminate hiding places for insects, carefully use a chisel or sharp knife to smooth the ragged edges of wounds where bark has been torn away.

*Try not to expose any more of the cambium (greenish inner bark) than is necessary, as these fragile layers contain the tree's food and water lifelines between roots and leaves.

Smoothing the ragged edge of torn bark helps the wound heal faster and eliminates hiding places for insects.





5. Resist the urge to overprune.

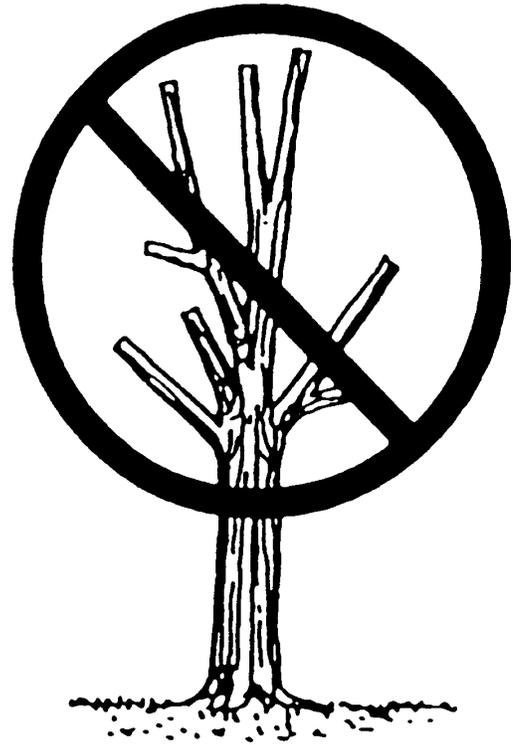
Don't worry if the tree's appearance isn't perfect. With branches gone, your trees may look unbalanced or naked. You'll be surprised at how fast they will heal, grow new foliage and return to their natural beauty.

6. Don't top your trees.

So-called "tree experts" may urge you to cut back all of the branches, on the mistaken assumption that reducing the length of branches will help avoid breakage in future storms. This practice is called "*Topping*" and it is one of the worst things you can do to your tree. Stubs will tend to grow back a lot of weakly- attached branches that are even more likely to break when a storm strikes. Topping the tree will reduce the amount of foliage, on which the tree depends for the food and nourishment needed for re-growth.

Topped trees are more likely to die than repair itself. At best, its recovery will be retarded and will almost never regain its original shape or beauty.

Hopefully following these six steps will protect you and your trees after a storm strikes.



Never cut the main branches of a tree back to stubs. Ugly, weakly attached limbs will often grow back higher than the original branches and be more likely to break off in a failure.

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