



Hurricanes & Trees

Hurricane and the Landscape “Prepare Your Site”

We have all learned that once the northern cool fronts have faded away, southern oceanic waters warm thus making conditions right for hurricanes and they seem to start appearing earlier and earlier each year. Living in south Louisiana, we all know the meaning of “getting ready” for the storm means stocking batteries, candles, water, canned goods and first aid supplies.

We need to also start thinking about “getting ready” the landscape that surrounds our home or business.

Trees and shrubs can provide a valuable buffer zone that can reduce storm damage. Studies show that foliage density and topography modify wind speed and direction.

WIND RESISTANT VEGETATION

High winds and storms can cause damage to trees. New studies of trees following hurricanes offer new knowledge to the ***Hurricane-Resistant Landscape***.

Trees can be classified now as “**Survivor trees**” and “**Victim trees**”.

SURVIVOR TREE – It is a compact tree, that has a major tap root and well-developed secondary roots. It also has a well-tapered trunk, and its center of gravity is low. Survives a storm well. Example – Live Oak.

VICTIM TREE – It is weighed down by a dense canopy and possesses a high center of gravity. They are generally fast growing, weak-wooded and shallow rooted. Does not survive the storm well. Examples – Pecan and Pines.

PROFILE OF WIND RESISTANT TREES

1. Native Species
2. Slow Growing Trees
3. Hard Woods
4. Young to Middle Age Tree
5. Very Healthy and Vigorous
6. Well Maintained
7. Low Center of Gravity
8. Deep Penetrating Radial Roots
9. Open Branching Character
10. Heavy Stout Leaders, Flexible Limbs and Short Leaf Branching
11. Small, Fine Textured Leaf
12. Deciduous Leaves

SURVIVOR TREES –

LSU LANDSCAPE PROFESSOR D. G. “BUCK” ABBEY LISTS HIS TOP 10 FAVORITE HURRICANE-RESISTANT TREES

1. Bald Cypress
2. Live Oak
3. Sabal Palm
4. Windmill Palm
5. Mexican Fan Palm
6. Black Gum
7. Cow Oak
8. Iron Wood
9. Shumard Oak
10. Winged Elm



OTHER GOOD WIND RESISTANT TREE SPECIES

American Elm
American Holly
American Hop Hornbean
Black Locust
Catalpa Tree
Cherrybark Oak
Cherry Laurel
Crape Myrtle
Dahoon Holly
Green Ash
Hackberry
Nuttall Oak
Osage Orange
Pond Cypress
River Birch
Sabal Palm
Savannah Holly
Southern Magnolia
Sycamore
Sweet Bay Magnolia
Sweet Gum
Tulip Tree
Willow Oak

“VICTIM” OR WEAK WOOD TREES

These trees are generally fast growing, shallow rooted in heavy clay or wet soils and either snap or up root in storms.

Pecans
Pines
Some Red Oaks
Red Cedars
Ornamental Pears
Willows
Silver Maples
Box Edlers
Cottonwoods
Hickories
Some Elms

Mature water oaks were severely damaged from Andrew’s path. They are trees that had short, shallow roots. It is a classic example of fast-growing, weak wooded trees that have a shallow-root system growing in heavy clay soil that were either uprooted or had severe stems snapped.

Avoid “Victim” type trees if possible in the urban setting.

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