

TIPS FOR TIPPY TREES

Before and After the Next Hurricane



[Adapted from the *Tillandsia*, Newsletter of The Dade Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society, September, 2005.]

You may have already cleaned up after this year's hurricanes, but you can be prepared for the next hurricane or other nasty weather with information for repairing damage to your landscape. Here is a little guidance. Send us your comments or additions for a future revision on the chapter Web site.

◆ Think ahead

- **Maintain healthy plants** throughout the year to help minimize storm damage. Some trees and shrubs may need preventive pruning.
- **The right plant in the right place.** Plant good quality nursery stock suitable for the location. Don't plant large trees near overhead lines where they may be frequently and poorly pruned, thereby reducing their structural integrity. Buried lines aren't always the answer -- buried lines and pipes can get damaged when trees tip over. Some plants may be more prone to tipping in wetter areas of your yard.
- **Seek information on tree care and licensed arborists from local sources.** The UF Extension office (www.ifas.ufl.edu, 305-248-3311 in Dade, 305-292-4501 in Monroe) has many circulars. Also see the Miami Herald's Home and Design section on Sundays (also online) and take classes at FTBG and MDC. Buy books by local experts (e.g., peruse Fairchild's store or store.fairchildonline.com; *Enchanted Ground* by Georgia Tasker for basic information; *An Illustrated Guide to Pruning* by Edward F. Gilman, an authority on Florida tree care).
- **Bookmark www.floridaisa.org, the Florida Chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture.** *Consumer Tree Care* takes you to www.treesaregood.com for how-to info. Then go back to *Professional Tree Care*. Look at Storm Damaged Trees (and comprehensive strategies under that) and other sections. (Articles in this section are on hort.ifas.ufl.edu, and are by Dr. Gilman). The information here will help you do the job -- or decide to hire an arborist to prune large, heavily damaged or poorly-formed trees..
- **Keep some supplies on hand** for staking and propping (see discussion for items needed).

◆ Right after the storm

- **Don't endanger yourself, others or the trees** if the job is beyond your strength or knowledge. Protect plants you want to try to save (see below) and arrange for work to be done later.
- **Cover exposed roots** (use shade cloth, blanket, etc.) and **keep the roots damp**. You may be able to save up-rooted trees even after some weeks.
- **If formerly shaded plants are getting burned** in the sun, make a temporary shelter over them with leafy branches or shade cloth.
- **Prune as little as possible until you can get knowledgeable help** or thoroughly evaluate the situation.

◆ Pruning

- **Review or seek information** before you cut!
- **Don't prune too soon.** Leaves on damaged branches may contribute to the tree's energy reserves. Waiting months (at least) to cut off sprouts and damaged branches of a tree with a lot of canopy or root damage can help the tree recover.
- **Prune above points of branching** and not closer than 1/2" (for small branches) to 1 1/2" (for large branches) to the larger branch or trunk.
- **When pruning off wind damage**, look for a change in the color of the bark, indicating where the damage begins.
- **Don't over-prune palms.** Try not to prune fronds with any green left. Never prune above "9 and 3" (imagine a clock).
- **DO NOT hatrack or cut the leader.**
- **Cut off broken limbs and roots cleanly** so that they may heal properly.

◆ Resetting tipped up or leaning trees and shrubs

- **Prune if needed to lighten**, then right the tree and prune if needed to reduce wind resistance.
- **Dig out the hole** before uprighting the tree, as soil may have been washed in.

- **Stake smaller trees and shrubs.** Strapping (webbed or rubber) is recommended over rope (which can cut the bark), or use rope through a section of rubber hose or pad with burlap. Some hardware or garden stores have **webbed strapping** (actually flexible AC duct hanger), e.g., Parker Sod, ProSource Manacement in Homestead., Joe Blair Garden Supply. See phone book for numbers. (Ask other garden stores to carry it, too!)
- **Prop heavy trees with 2x4s.** Don't nail directly to the trunk. Encircle the trunk with short sections of wood, fastening them together by encircling with a strap (get **metal plumbers strap** used for hanging pipes at hardware stores). It may take 2 or 3 people to do this! Put burlap under the wood to protect the bark. Nail props to the encircling brace. (Look at examples done by contractors along roads.)
- **Carefully push leaning trees** (roots not exposed) without straining them and prop with 2x4s padded with burlap (see above).
- **Cut temporary props** from tree branches in your debris pile, leaving a fork at the end.
- **Remove the stakes or props when the tree is well-rooted** again -- maybe 6 months or more.
- **Keep watering for a few weeks and through the dry winter** as you would a newly-planted tree.
- **Replanting** in a new hole is sometimes best.
- **Remember how fast things grow here!** If the plant is too battered or difficult and expensive to rehabilitate, let nearby volunteers grow up or plant a new one.

◆ **Tidy up – but not too much**

- **Mulch trees and beds (except pineland) with the leaf litter.**
- **Remove leaves and debris from pinelands** or "pineland gardens" unless it is from the pineland plants themselves. Organic matter in pinelands should be kept to a minimum.
- **Leave some stumps or pieces of logs.** They can be nesting cavities, perches, feeding site for insects and the critters that feed on them, plant stands, bromeliad holders, decorative edging, seats, *objects d'art*.
- **Piles of brush can be havens for wildlife**, and you will see birds foraging for insects in piles of branches. Even after these piles have been taken away, your yard will be more diverse if it is not too 'tidy'. Some solitary bees like to nest in dead twigs, and the more variety you have in substrates the greater number of potential pollinators and beneficial insects your yard will have.
- **Leave broken branches with fruit for birds** to feed on.
- **Save some ripe fruits and seeds for people who propagate** (members and perhaps some nurseries may need them).
- **Alert your cleanup helpers** to small plants, native tree snails, spiders and other items in your yard that are not "trash."
- **Save some volunteer seedlings and pot them up** for future plants sales, raffles or simply sharing with others.
- **Offer logs to woodturners.** Act quickly! Wood may need to be taken within a few days before it dries. These are probably the most desirable natives, depending on the size. If you don't know any woodturners, contact FNPS member Ed McSweeney (305-258-5418, mcsweeney@infionline.net).

Crabwood (*Ateramnus lucidus*)-- even smallest size used

Black Ironwood (*Krugiodendron ferraeum*)

Mahogany (*Swietenia mahagoni*)

Geiger Tree (*Cordia sebestena*) – heartwood

Lignum vitae (*Guaicum sanctum*)

Jamaica Dogwood (*Piscidia piscipula*)

Stoppers (*Eugenia*, *Myriacanthos spp.*)

West Indian Cherry (*Prunus myrtifolia*)

Eastern Red Cedar (*Juniperus virginiana*)

◆ **Learn from past mistakes**

Make this an opportunity to improve your yard! (Maybe even start a pine land?) This is a good time to share with your neighbors how well your native trees performed – and how well they rebound.

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