

## SAVANNAH TREE FOUNDATION

*Preserve. Protect. Plant. Since 1982.*

# TREE CARE BEFORE AND AFTER STORMS

## PREPARING FOR STORMS—AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION

Major storms can inflict severe damage to the tree canopy in a very short period. Yet some trees survive with minimal damage. With proper advance care, much of the most severe damage to trees and property can be avoided. Here are seven suggestions for tree care before a storm strikes:

1. **Remove All Dead Branches**
2. **Encourage Good Branch Angles:** For most deciduous trees, narrow angles in the forks between branches indicate future points of failure. Angles should be at 10:00 and 2:00 o'clock or greater.
3. **Encourage A Strong Branch/Trunk Size Relationship:** Lateral branches should be no greater than  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  the diameter of the adjacent trunk.
4. **Maintain A Stable Center Of Gravity:** If a tree is leaning, remove or correctly prune branches on the leaning side and encourage branch growth on the opposite side.
5. **Remove Temporary Branches:** This includes water sprouts, suckers, and branches that are rubbing each other.
6. **Don't Form Stubs When Pruning Branches:** If a branch needs to be removed, cut it back cleanly to the trunk or to the main branch. Stubs invite insect infestation, fungal disease, and rot.
7. **Remove Heavy Vine Growth:** As attractive as it may be, heavy coverings of English Ivy, Wisteria, multiflora rose, Virginia Creeper, and other vines create additional wind resistance and add additional weight to limbs, often leading to failure in storms.

## AFTER THE STORM—FIRST THINGS FIRST

In the immediate aftermath of a storm, many homeowners rush to clear away as much debris as possible, often making decisions to remove trees that could have been saved with proper treatment and care. Unless your trees are a life or safety issue, it is best to step back and prudently assess the tree damage.

--**If A Tree Requires Immediate Attention, Call A Certified Arborist.** If a tree is leaning on wires, buildings, or snagged on other trees, *professional* assistance is needed. If the tree is on a city right-of-way, call 311 before having work done. If you are not sure if the tree is on a city right-of-way, call 311 to find out. Contact your insurance company before work is done to clarify their requirements; they may need to approve of any contractor you hire.

--**If The Tree Is Not A Hazard, Make Sure It Gets Continued Care.** It is fine to wait a few weeks or months before making a decision on the fate of a tree. The cost for such treatment may well go down from that quoted directly after a storm.

--**Carefully Assess A Tree's Potential For Survival:** If more than half a tree's branches or mass has been damaged and needs to be removed, it is doubtful that it will be able to produce adequate foliage for nourishment in the coming seasons. If in doubt, schedule a consultation with a certified arborist.

--**Don't Be Scammed:** After a storm tree care "experts" come out of the woodwork, offering to remove your trees for a very low price. Unfortunately, one gets what one pays for and the end result of such work is often very unsatisfactory.

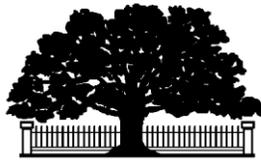
Use these five questions to guide you in finding qualified tree-care specialists:

1. Is the person part of an established community business? Check for a reputable website or phone number. Do they even know what an arborist is?



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2. Has the person provided evidence that they are regularly employed with the company? Some specialists work as independent contractors and have a limited relationship with the company they claim as their employers.
3. Is the person up-to-date on certification? Ask for current certificates of insurance for property damage, personal liability and worker's compensation.
4. Is the person a member of a professional association? While not essential, it is ideal that the individual be a part of a professional association of arborists, such as the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA), the National Arborist Association (NAA) or the American Society of Consulting Arborists (ASCA).
5. Is the person offering a competitive price? If possible, obtain more than one estimate to ensure that the price offered is comparable with competitors. Clarify whether the price includes removal and clean-up.

Hire a professional who is part of an established community business with a website and phone number, who is up-to-date on certificates of liability (personal and property) insurance, and workers' compensation, and who, preferably, is a member of a professional association of arborists such as the ISA, NAA, or ASCA. Hire a professional and you are assured that you will get good advice, good tree treatment, and will be protected should something go wrong.

### **AFTER THE STORM--DOING IT YOURSELF**

If after damage analysis and/or consultation with a professional, you decide to work on a damaged tree yourself, here are some rules to follow:

--**Don't Try To Do It Yourself:** If it is a large tree with large hanging branches ("widow makers") and will require climbing and overhead chainsaw work, DON'T do it yourself. Call a certified arborist.

--**Don't Try To Do It Yourself:** If there are downed electrical lines, phone or cable lines in the area call the utility company.

If you are *still* determined to work on a damaged tree, here are some pointers:

--**Remove Broken Branches:** Remove the jagged remains of broken branches. With large branches, remove the larger part of the branch up to 12"-24" from the trunk, then go back and carefully remove the stub close to the trunk. Smaller branches should be pruned back to their juncture with a larger branch.

--**Repair Torn Bark:** With a sharp chisel or sharp knife smooth the edges of wounds where bark has been torn or shredded. Do not expose the inner greenish cambium layer any more than necessary, since it is necessary for transport of food and water within the tree. Do not "paint" the wounds.

--**Never Top A Tree:** Professionals advise that topping your tree is a bad procedure. Not only does it weaken the tree by removing a large amount of food-producing foliage at a time when the tree is weakened by storm damage, but the great number of cuts and stubs open the tree up to fungal disease and insect infestation. Far better is selective pruning that reduces a lop-sided growth pattern or a lop-sided pattern due to storm damage, but retains as much of the original growth form as possible.

**For Trees in the City of Savannah Right-of-Way call 311**

**For Additional Information visit [www.savannahtree.com](http://www.savannahtree.com), [Links and Resources](#) page**



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