



For Immediate Release

Salvage Your Assets

Help storm damaged trees recover from the hurricanes

CHAMPAIGN, IL (July 2012) – The trail of damage after major storms, such as this past weekend's derecho, truly reveals the power of Mother Nature, and the remains can be devastating, especially for trees. Unprotected, trees are vulnerable to storms' damages. The wounds may look fatal, however, even though major branches may be broken, foliage might be shredded, or the bark may be torn and gouged, trees have an amazing ability to recover from even the most severe cases. The International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) offers some post storm advice to help you and your trees recover from this disaster.

Post-Storm First Aid:

Do not try to do it all yourself – If large limbs are broken or hanging, or if ladder or overhead chain saw work is needed, it is a job for a professional arborist.

Assess the damages – Evaluate your trees carefully by asking the following questions: Other than the storm damage, is the tree basically healthy and vigorous? Are major limbs or the leader (the main upward-trending branch on most trees) branch still remaining? Is at least 50 percent of the tree's crown (branches and leaves) still intact? Are there remaining branches that can form a new branch structure? If you answered "yes" to the majority of these questions, there is a good chance for complete recovery. For assistance, hire an ISA Certified Arborist to determine the tree's conditions.

Stand trees back up – Many trees suffer friction failures that cause the tree's root system to lift out of the ground as the tree leans over. Uprooted trees are often unnecessarily removed under the mistaken idea that they cannot be saved. These trees can often be saved but are very dangerous. The tension caused by the roots still in the ground can cause the tree to snap back. Consult the service of an ISA Certified Arborist if you are unsure about performing this work.

Beware of price gouging – Sometimes less credible tree services will take advantage of storm victims. Good tree work by qualified professionals is not inexpensive, however, poor work, no matter the price paid, can cost you a great deal. Professional prices should include liability and workman's compensation insurance, as well as bucket trucks and equipment. It does not include heavier specialty equipment that may be needed such as cranes, loaders, etc., or hardware that may be installed in the tree.

Financial Recovery – Be aware that tree losses to your landscape, whether large or small, may be deductible from your taxes. Two steps must be taken to be able to claim this deduction: 1. Document the tree damage/loss with photos and an evaluation from an ISA Certified Arborist who has experience appraising trees. Such a Certified Arborist will be able to provide you with an estimated dollar value for your loss. 2. Consult the services of a tax professional. You may be entitled to some financial relief through a provision in the tax code that allows you to deduct casualty losses from your income tax.

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The time to prepare your trees for tropical storms is long before hurricane season. Steps such as pruning trees right before a storm can lead to hasty or improper tree care. ISA also provides some tips to help prepare you and trees for possible future storm damage.

Pre-Storm Preparation:

Look for potential Hazards – Investigate the condition of your trees. You or a Certified Arborist should look for damage such as cracks in the trunk or major limbs; hollow, aged, and decayed trees; hanging branches; improperly formed branches; one-sided or significantly leaning trees; and branches that may potentially rub the house.

Know your tree species – Some species are more prone to storm damage. You should have a certified arborist evaluate your trees for hardiness and resilience. Being aware of which trees may succumb to harsh weather conditions, will help you decide if you want to replace these potentially dangerous species.

Do not top your trees – Untrained individuals may urge you to cut back all of the branches, on the mistaken assumption that it will help avoid breakage in future storms. However, professional arborists say that “topping,” the cutting of main branches back to stubs, is extremely harmful and unhealthy for your trees. Stubs will often grow back many weakly attached branches that are higher and are more likely to break when a storm strikes. Also, topping will reduce the amount of foliage, on which the tree depends for the food and nourishment needed for re-growth. A topped tree that has already sustained major storm damage is more likely to die than repair itself.

Protect your asset – Trees may increase property value by up to 20%. Find out if your homeowner’s insurance will cover any damage your landscape may sustain due to unnatural causes, and include the total value of your trees when listing your assets for coverage. A Certified Arborist can provide an estimated value by inspecting your trees.

Trees are dynamic living things that require proper care. Hiring a Certified Arborist who can assist you with pre-storm inspections and post-storm repairs can help avoid unnecessary loss of your trees.

About ISA

The International Society of Arboriculture (ISA), headquartered in Champaign, Ill., is a nonprofit organization supporting tree care research and education around the world. To promote the importance of arboriculture, ISA manages the consumer education web site, www.treesaregood.org, which fulfills the association’s mission to help educate the public about the importance and value of proper tree care. Also, as part of ISA’s dedication to the care and preservation of shade and ornamental trees, it offers the only internationally-recognized certification program in the industry. For more information on ISA and Certified Arborists, visit isa-arbor.com.

