



Tree Inspections and Treatments for Storm Damaged Trees

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Following major storms such as hurricanes and ice storms, property owners should have their trees inspected for storm related defects and conditions that require attention. Without leaves, arborists can perform a more thorough inspection of stem and branch structure. Here are some primary considerations as we move forward into the coming year:

Inspections: Even if damage is not apparent in your trees, they should be carefully inspected by an ISA Certified Arborist for subtle defects such as cracked branches, splits in stems and shifting of the root plate. These defects can lead to branch or even whole tree failures in the future. A Certified Arborist can also assess severely storm-damaged trees and develop recommendations for remedial treatments or advise as to the need for removal.

Pruning: Broken, hanging branches and branch stubs, resulting from breakage, require removal. Proper pruning techniques are critical to avoid insect and disease infestations later in the growing season. Trees and shrubs that have lost significant portions of their crown in the storm may require crown renovation. This form of pruning can begin now, but must be continued over a period of years to restructure a desirable, healthy crown.

Structural Support Cables: Trees that were damaged in a storm may develop structural weaknesses that will predispose them to future storm damage. Crown reduction or thinning may be needed to reduce the potential for future damage. Steel support cables and brace rods also can be installed in branches to reduce the risk of failure.

Leaning Trees: Trees less than 20 feet in height that now lean may require staking or guying. Larger trees usually can not and should not be guyed. These trees should be inspected by a Certified Arborist to determine if the root plate may have shifted. Trees with guys or stakes should be inspected periodically during the year to ensure that wires, ropes or cables used to support the tree do not girdle the stem. Guys and stakes usually are removed after one growing season, but may need to remain longer in some cases.

Plant Health Care: Plants weakened by storms may have already been under stress from various environmental factors over the last few years. Wounds created by the storm add stress to plants and they are more readily invaded by insect borers and disease-causing organisms. Plants should be inspected through the growing season for evidence of these “secondary invaders” and treatments applied as necessary to reduce damage. Fertilization and other amendments, applied based on soil analysis, will aid recovery. Irrigation and proper mulching of storm-damaged trees are important when dry weather returns.