

Green Garden News

The Storm-Damaged Landscape Check List

1. Cleanup is the first priority. Remove all debris, leaves and mud from the landscape.
2. Site analysis: If land forms have been altered, these need to be reshaped. Don't allow heavy equipment to move close to trunks of remaining shrubs and trees. Remember that most roots extend well beyond the outer branches; therefore, heavy equipment can damage roots and compact soil.
3. Plants that are leaning should be reset and staked. Trees that have been reset in the ground should be watered twice a week and fertilizer should not be applied. Until they become re-established, fertilizer will prove to be of no major benefit and may cause possible injury to new tender feeder roots.
4. Despite the fact that many trees and shrubs remain upright following the hurricane, they may have been tossed back and forth creating a hollowing of the soil around the major support roots. Where this has occurred, add soil and water in it to eliminate air pockets around the roots.
5. If portions of uniform plantings, such as hedges, were taken out by the storm, select replacements as

close to size as feasible. Don't be tempted to cut hard on remaining plants for uniformity. Wait until late winter for hard pruning to help re-establish uniform size.

6. Trim partially damaged shrubs and trees as lightly as possible to reshape. Complete reshaping could take several growing seasons. Make a careful decision on this. For example, if one-third of a plant is missing, replacement might be a better choice than commitment to "nursing" the plant back into shape with pruning, fertilizing, watering. A damaged plant will be a "shocked" plant.

7. How much damage is too much damage to warrant replacement? If heavy splitting of bark exposing the cambium occurred, a plant will probably not survive. Leave woody plants that are doubtful as to survival in place and wait. Check periodically by scraping bark lightly to reveal green (living) tissue.

8. Some uprooted plants can be reset if the root ball is fairly intact with a compact root system, white healthy roots are showing and most of the top growth remains.

9. Prepare remaining plants for overwintering. Mulch with 3-4 inches

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August Gardening Tips

Flowers

- Annuals to plant include coleus and salvia.
- Pinch or deadhead and re-fertilize flowering annual beds in order to keep them productive.
- Check flowering plants weekly in order to head off insect or disease problems.
- Prepare perennial beds for planting next month. September is one of the best times to establish perennials in our area, especially those that are started from divisions such as lirioppe, mondo grass and day-lilies.
- Do all that you can to increase air circulation between plants so that the foliage and stems can dry off between rain showers to decrease the possibility of fungal diseases such as leaf and stem blights.

Trees and Shrubs

- Watch for azalea defoliator caterpillars on azaleas. These are the large, black caterpillars that can strip foliage and weaken plants very quickly. Control them by hand picking or with an approved insecticide.
- Check shrubs weekly in order to head off insect or disease problems.
- White webbing that covers the branches and trunks of trees is from a group of insects called the psocids (tree cattle). These insects do not injury trees but feed on surface debris.

- Finish any major pruning on hydrangeas and gardenias.

Fruits and Nuts

- Last call for major pruning of blueberries

Vegetable Garden

- The warm-season vegetables that can be planted outdoors include pole beans, lima beans, sweet corn, cucumbers, southern peas, peppers, pumpkins, summer squash, winter squash, tomatoes and watermelon.
- Some fall planted warm-season vegetables are subject to more severe pest problems than spring planted crops. More intensive pest control measures will be required.
- The cool-season vegetables that can be planted include broccoli, cauliflower, collards, bunching onions, and turnips.

Lawns

- Watch for chinch bugs in St. Augustinegrass
- Watch for mole crickets and sod webworms
- To help reduce stress on the grass as temperatures rise, raise the lawn mowing height by ½ to 1 inch.
- Check your lawn weekly in order to head off insect or disease problems.

Plant Lists for Northwest Florida

Looking for replacement plants? Be sure to choose plants that are well-adapted for your growing conditions. Plants that are suited to your soil type and sun/shade conditions will be healthier, stronger plants and will be able to withstand tropical storms better.

For information on plants that do well in northwest Florida, take a look at the following UF/IFAS publications.

- **Native Trees for Northwest Florida:** <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/EP007>
- **Ornamental Trees for North Florida:** <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/EP015>

- **Selected Shrubs for North Florida:** <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/MG344>
- **Groundcovers for North Florida:** <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/EH137>
- **Ornamental Palms for North Florida:** <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/EP019>
- **Salt Tolerance of Landscape Plants for North Florida:** <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/WO014>
- **North Florida Landscape Plants for Wet Areas:** <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/MG253>

UF Researchers Take Pulse Of Hurricane Dennis

University of Florida researchers worked on at least two separate projects that helped gauge Hurricane Dennis' fury.

In the first, a team of research engineers from UF and two other Florida universities deployed five mobile wind towers in Dennis' projected path, then monitored and recorded the hurricane's winds as it powered ashore. In the second project, UF Institute of Food and Agriculture Sciences researchers followed the hurricane's impact on UF's "hurricane house" near Pensacola, built to withstand winds exceeding 140 mph.

The 3,000-square-foot house adjacent to the Escambia County Extension office was all but undamaged. The top wind gust the engineers measured was about 120 mph, about the same as reported by meteorologists.

With both projects, data and experience from the storm's strike will add to the growing body of knowledge about how to build homes to withstand hurricanes.

"Overall, the idea is to learn the most efficient way to make houses stronger without costing a lot more," Kurt Gurley, a UF associate professor of civil engineering, said of the tower project.

Gurley's team of 17 research engineers and students from UF, Florida International University and the Florida Institute of Technology left Gainesville on Friday and Saturday, towing the towers behind Ford F-250 trucks. The project is part of a larger hurricane research effort called the Florida Coastal Monitoring Program, sponsored by the Florida Department of Community Affairs.

Designed for quick setup and able to withstand 200-mph winds, the 5,500-pound structures stand more than 33 feet tall when erected. They house instruments measuring wind speed and direction, barometric pressure, humidity and rainfall.

The team put up the towers between Navarre, just east of Pensacola, and Panama City. They also placed instrumentation designed to measure hurricane wind forces on four pre-selected homes in Navarre, Destin and Santa Rosa Beach. Dennis made landfall Sunday afternoon between Pensacola Beach and Navarre Beach.

Team members spent Saturday and Sunday nights in Mary Esther, but they were able to gauge

the tower data in real time thanks to a cell phone connection to three of the towers' onboard computers. The peak preliminary wind gust of 120 mph was recorded by the Navarre tower, probably located in or near the eye of Hurricane Dennis, Gurley said.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration also tapped the tower data. NOAA uses the UF data, as well as data from other sources such as satellites and research aircraft, to produce detailed maps of hurricane wind forces used by FEMA and other responders to hurricanes.

The tower data "is probably the most accurate wind measurement we can use in our analysis, so we're very happy to have it," said Mark Powell, a NOAA atmospheric scientist based in Miami.

The hurricane house, officially known as the Escambia Windstorm Damage Mitigation, Training and Demonstration Center, was undamaged with the exception of some wet carpet, said Lamar Christenberry, Escambia County Extension Director.

The house shows how existing homes can be made more hurricane-resistant. For example, its features include impact-resistant doors, a steel "safe room" and a garage door that will withstand winds of more than 150 mph.

"Our hurricane house demonstrates that it is possible to build a home that will come through hurricanes such as Dennis and Ivan with little or no damage" Christenberry said.

The house is one of three facilities located at UF/IFAS Extension Service offices around the state. The Florida Department of Financial Services provided \$2.3 million for the houses, and UF's Shimberg Center for Affordable Housing in the College of Design, Construction and Planning supervised their design and construction.

In the wake of four devastating hurricanes in 2004 and with the likelihood of another active hurricane season this year, the houses are becoming magnets for educating builders and residents about wind-loss mitigation, energy efficiency and environmentally sensitive construction, said Pierce Jones, director of the UF/IFAS Florida Energy Extension Service.

—UF New Release, July 11, 2005

Upcoming Events

Every Tuesday in August: *Plant Diagnostic Clinic.* This free clinic is open to the public from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm on Tuesdays at the South Santa Rosa Service Center at 5819 Gulf Breeze Pkwy. If you are having problems with your lawn or plants, bring a sample in and an Extension Horticulturist or Master Gardener will be available to discuss your gardening questions. For more information about what type of sample to bring visit our website at <http://www.santarosa.fl.gov/extension/horticulture/diagnostics.html>.

August 13, 2005: *Real Mammals Fly!* This bat workshop is being hosted by the Gulf Coast Regional Research & Extension Center (Highway 104, Fairhope, AL) on Saturday, August 13th from 10 am to 2 pm. The workshop will include activities and hands-on experiences. Each participant will receive a resource packet with educational materials, craft ideas and information on the Adopt-A-Bat program. Registration is \$25 and covers program costs, lunch and beverages, materials for a bat house and a resource packet. For more information contact Rhonda Bryars at 251-937-7176 or bryarrm@aces.edu. Registration deadline is Friday, August 5th.

August 18, 2005: *Gulf Coast Gardening From the Ground UP: Vines for Northwest Florida.* This free program is open to the public and will be presented at the Milton Library at 5541 Alabama Street, Milton, FL. Registration will open at 6:00 pm and the program will start at 6:30 pm. Dr. Mack Thetford, UF/IFAS Assistant Professor will be presenting a program on vines. Find out which vines are recommended for this area and learn how they will perform in your landscape.

August 19, 2005: *2005 Deep South sHort Course.* This annual event will offer lectures on stormscaping, conifers, insect and disease management, pruning and invasive plants and afternoon workshops on photography and new plants for the Gulf Coast. Register on-line at <http://wfrec.ifas.ufl.edu/WFREC/events.htm> or contact Robin Vickers, Events Coordinator at (850) 983-5216 ext. 113. Registration is \$45 and includes lunch and handouts.

For persons with disabilities requiring special accommodations, please contact the SRC Extension Office at least 5 working days prior to the program so that proper consideration may be given to the request.
(850) 623-3868

Staking a Small Tree

Small trees that were blown over during Hurricane Dennis can be reset if done promptly after the damage.

Once reset, trees should be held in position with stakes or guy wires. Trees with trunk diameters less than two inches can usually be anchored by two or three forty-eight inch, two-by-two inch wood stakes. The stakes should be placed about a foot outside the root ball and inserted eighteen inches into the soil. Secure the stake to the trunk with ties made from wide, smooth material or hose-covered twine. Trees two inches or larger in



diameter should be guyed with three or four cables. Guys are secured to deeply driven short stakes evenly spaced outside the root ball. Guys should be run through rubber hose and secured to the trunk at only one level. Mark the support guys with bright materials to prevent accidents. Guys should be adjusted several times during the growing season so that girdling and injury to the trunks are minimized. All support stakes and guys should be removed after one year.

Questions and Answers

Q: My trees are still standing but were damaged by Hurricane Dennis. Who can evaluate the trees and tell me how to care for them.

A: Arborists make a career of caring for trees in urban and suburban landscapes. They work for companies commonly referred to as tree experts, tree services, tree care, arborists, tree specialists, and others. Here are a few tips for selecting a company to work with your trees:

- Avoid arborists who advertise they top trees. Ask the arborists if they will top your trees. If they say yes, don't use them.
- Have more than one arborist look at the job, and get a written proposal specifying the work to be done. Consider paying an arborist to write specifications so you can give them to the prospective companies.
- Ask for and check local references.
- Be sure the company has the appropriate licenses, insurance, and certifications. Some communities require special permits, insurance or certifications for all arborists to practice in the community.
- Ask them what the ANSI A300 pruning standard and the ANSI Z133.1 safety standards are. Ask if their practices will be in compliance with the standards.
- Ask them what tree book they have read most recently.
- Ask them what seminar they attended most recently and when was it held.
- Beware of an arborist who suggests removal of living trees. Removal of living trees is sometimes necessary, but should be considered the last resort after all other options have been considered.
- Determine if the arborist is certified with the International Society of Arboriculture (www.isa-arbor.com). Certified arborists must pass a written test and maintain certification by regularly attending classes. Except for registered consulting arborists with the American Society of Consulting Arborists, membership in other organizations is useful, but no tests or training are required for membership. Members simply pay dues to belong.

- Ask for verification of personal and property liability insurance and worker's compensation (or a waiver of worker's compensation).
- Low price is a poor gauge of a quality arborist. Often the better ones are more expensive because of more specialized equipment, more professional training, and insurance costs.
- Know if your state or municipality requires a specific license or certification for providing these services

Q: My ten-year old Bradford pear split down the middle during Hurricane Dennis. The half remaining is standing tall. Since the tree is so pretty, I am going to give it a chance to recuperate. Do I paint or cover the exposed area of the trunk or do I let it heal on its own? A local nursery told me that they recommend not using anything and letting it heal itself. Your thoughts?

A: I agree with the nursery about not painting it, but I disagree with you about keeping it. One of the disadvantages of using Bradford pear is its longevity in the landscape—or lack thereof. With its distinct, compact, oval shape, branches are attached at very narrow angles. These angles create what are known as “V” crotches. As the tree matures, V-crotches lay the foundation for the bark of opposing branches to push against each other, a condition called included bark. Add strong wind and the combination spells almost certain disaster.

Replace your Bradford with stronger alternatives. One such alternative native is *Chionanthus virginicus* (fringe tree, old man's beard). Mildly fragrant, white flowers grace the branches in spring. Their lacy appearance giving rise to the common name “old man's beard”.

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of pine straw, pecan shells, leaves, etc.

10. Remember that autumn is the best time for planting and transplanting landscape shrubs, trees, vines, and most ground covers. Don't move deciduous plants until after their leaves are shed.

11. Plants that have been exposed to salt water should be irrigated with fresh water as soon as possible. Apply more water and water more frequently than under normal conditions. Waiting for symptoms of salt damage to appear could result in serious damage to your plants.



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