

Tips to Care for Storm-Damaged Trees from Illinois Arborist Association

Simple steps taken now can have a lasting positive impact on your private property trees!

ANTIOCH, Ill. – This week, much of Illinois experienced several days of wind not seen for a generation. The trail of destruction across the state included thousands of trees either severely damaged or at least impacted by Mother Nature. Unprotected, trees that are damaged may appear to have fatal wounds. However, though major branches may be broken, or the bark may be torn and gouged, trees have an amazing ability to recover from even the most severe cases.

First aid for damaged trees after a major storm can help trees recover, urges the Illinois Arborist Association (IAA), the local chapter of the International Society of Arboriculture (ISA). Residents are encouraged to follow a few simple tree first aid procedures:

- 1. 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, ISA Certified Arborist.
- 2. Take safety precautions.** Look up and look down. Be on the alert and stay away from downed utility lines and dangerous hanging branches which look ready to fall.
- 3. Assess the damages.** Evaluate your trees carefully by asking: Other than the wind damage, is the tree basically healthy and vigorous? Are major limbs 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. Contact an ISA Certified Arborist to determine the tree's exact condition.
- 4. Remove any broken branches or stubs still attached to the tree.** Remove the jagged remains of smaller sized broken limbs to minimize the risk of decay. Prune smaller branches at the point where they join larger ones. For larger broken branches, a professional arborist who has the necessary equipment and knowledge should cut them back to the trunk or a main limb.
- 5. Resist the urge to over-prune.** Do not worry if the tree's appearance is not perfect. With branches gone, your trees may look unbalanced or naked. You will be surprised at how fast they will heal, grow new foliage, and return to their natural beauty.
- 6. Do not top your trees!** Professional arborists say that "topping," the cutting of main branches back to stubs, is extremely harmful and unhealthy for trees. Stubs often grow back many weakly attached branches that are higher and are more likely to break when a storm strikes. Also, topping reduces 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.

Please remember that for trees located on the Village of Wilmette's parkway, it is the Village's responsibility to provide any necessary follow-up care post a storm damage event. Please contact the

Public Works Forestry Division at 847-853-7600 or forestry@wilmette.com regarding any questions or concerns related to trees adjacent to your property.

A qualified tree care professional can assist you with your tree damages and will perform the job safely. To locate a private certified arborist in your area, contact the IAA at (877) 617-8887 or visit www.illinoisarborist.org.

Illinois Arborist Association background

The Illinois Arborist Association is a non-profit organization that educates members and the general public in proper tree care. IAA supports research on trees and is based on the mission to "Foster interest, establish standards, exchange professional ideas and pursue scientific research in Arboriculture."

###