

## **STORM INJURY ON TREES**

When a tree is injured by a storm, try to determine if it is worth saving. If it is severely damaged and has been a weak-wooded problem tree, it may not be worth saving. If the tree is moderately damaged and is a valuable addition to the landscape, it may be worth the work and money to repair it.

Wind is the most common type of storm damage. Depending upon the extent of damage, the branches broken by wind can be pruned off and the tree will recover. If the tree is uprooted, it is destroyed beyond recovery.

Repairing wounds is important because, if ignored, decay may set into the wound area. First clean the wound by trimming away loose, injured bark with a sharp knife, making a clean edge between healthy bark and exposed wood. Where entire limbs have been broken, cut the limb back to the main trunk.

Breakage and cracking are not only damage your tree may suffer in high winds. Damage occurs internally when the trunk or branches bend in high winds and the inner layers separate from each other under severe stress. Particularly vulnerable is the cambium or growth layer. Root systems are also susceptible to damage. Roots serve two purposes: absorbing nutrients and water; and providing an anchor for the tree. If a tree is almost uprooted in a storm, roots may break. This makes the tree more vulnerable to later storms and inhibits water uptake. Symptoms of hidden storm damage include early leaf drop, browning leaf edges, early fall color, wilting, and general decline over the years that can be dated from the time of the storm and not attributed to any other problem.

When Lightning strikes a tree, the damage is sometimes hidden. Often the top of the tree is shattered. Even if the top looks good, the root system may be damaged and eventually lead to the death of the tree.

When a tree has suffered damage be sure to water it well for several years, especially in times of drought.

diagrams on proper tree branch removal & other issues in caring for damaged trees.

[www.kbs.msu.edu](http://www.kbs.msu.edu) > Information resources for storm damage on trees.

The **Master Gardener Hotline** is open from April to October, Monday through Friday. Lines are available 9:00 am to noon and 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm at 888-678-3464

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