

Oregon Dept. of Forestry issued this news release today.

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Contact: Paul Ries, 503-508-0990 (cell)

Can your tree be saved after a storm?

In the aftermath of a major storm, the initial impulse of property owners is generally along the lines of "let's get this mess cleaned up." But hasty decisions can often result in removing trees that could have been saved. What at first glance may look like mortal wounds are not necessarily fatal to a tree.

Doing the right things after trees have been damaged can make the difference between giving your trees a good chance of survival and losing them unnecessarily. Trees have an amazing ability to recover from storm damage. The Oregon Department of Forestry and the National Arbor Day Foundation recommend the following steps for determining if trees can be saved.

Before writing off a damaged tree as a "goner," homeowners should evaluate their trees by asking the following questions:

- Other than the storm damage, is the tree basically healthy? If it is basically healthy, does not create a hazard, and did not suffer major structural damage, it will generally recover with first aid measures taken soon after the storm.
- Are major limbs broken? The larger a broken limb is, the harder it will be for the tree to recover from the damage. If a majority of the main branches are gone, the tree may have little chance of surviving.
- Has the leader (the main upward-trending branch on most trees) been lost? In species where a leader is important to upward growth or desirable appearance, it may have to be a judgment call. The tree may live without its leader, but at best

would be a stunted or deformed version of the original.

- Is at least 50 percent of the tree's crown (branches and leaves) still intact? A good rule of thumb on tree survivability is a tree with less than half of its branches remaining may not be able to produce enough foliage to nourish the tree through another season.
- How big are the wounds where branches have been broken or bark has been damaged? The larger the wound is in relation to the size of the limb, the less likely it is to heal, leaving the tree vulnerable to disease and pests. A two- to three-inch wound on a 12-inch diameter limb will seal over with new bark within a couple of years.
- Are there remaining branches that can form a new branch structure? The remaining limbs will grow more vigorously as the tree tries to replace its missing foliage. Look to see if branches are in place that can eventually fill out the tree's appearance.
- Is the tree a desirable species for its location? If the tree is in the wrong location (such as a potentially tall tree beneath a power line), or an undesirable species for the property (messy fruit, etc.), it may be best to remove it if it has serious damage.

The questions listed above will help you make informed decisions about your trees. In general, the answer as to what to do about a particular tree will fall into one of three categories:

1. It's a Keeper. If damage is relatively slight, prune any broken branches, repair torn bark or rough edges around wounds, and let the tree begin the process of wound repair.

2. Wait and See. If a valuable tree appears to be a borderline case, resist the temptation to simply cut the tree down and be done with it. In such cases, it may be best to stand back for a while and think it over. Remember that time is on your side. After careful pruning of broken branches, give the tree time to recover. A final decision can be made later.

3. Say Goodbye. Some trees simply can't be saved or are not worth saving. If the tree has already been weakened by disease, if the trunk is split, or more than 50 percent of the crown is gone, the tree has lost its survival edge.

Removing Trees? Before doing so, contact your city or owners association. Communities may want to keep track of storm damage or they may have programs in place to assist you with clean up. Additionally, some communities may have laws that address removals. If you will be digging, call Oregon's one call service to have any utilities that may be underground identified at 1-800-332-2344.

Don't Try to Do It All Alone. Some of your trees may have damage that's too close to call, may have hidden damage, or may have large limbs that are broken or hanging. To help you decide what to do about these trees and to do any high climbing or overhead chainsaw work, a tree professional is recommended. They have the necessary equipment and knowledge needed. Look for a certified arborists listed in the telephone directory , generally listed under "Tree Service" or online at www.pnwisa.org/arborist.html .

Don't Top Your Trees! Untrained individuals may urge you to cut back all of the branches, on the mistaken assumption that reducing the length of branches will help avoid breakage in future storms. While storm damage may not always allow for ideal pruning cuts, professional arborists say that "topping" - cutting main branches back to stubs - is one of the worst things you can do for your trees. Stubs will tend to grow back a lot of weakly-attached branches that are even

more likely to break when another storm strikes. Also, the tree will need all its resources to recover from the stress of storm damage. Topping the tree 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. At best, its recovery will be retarded and it will almost never regain its original shape or beauty.

MORE INFORMATION:

For additional information on urban forestry and tree care, visit the following websites:

www.pnwisa.org/tree-care.html

www.arboday.org

www.treesaregood.com