

Archive for May, 2013

Got Storm Damage?

Friday, May 31st, 2013

It's been a stormy few weeks throughout the midwest, and Missouri has not been immune to the damages caused by the various types of vectors (wind, rain, flooding, hail, etc.). Never is the danger to a tree greater than during the inevitable trial by storm. Homeowners can do very little while the storm is raging, except to watch and hope that their tree(s) survive(s) nature's onslaught. Survival, or loss, depends on how well your tree is managed both before the storm strikes, and in the aftermath (very critical). Knowing ahead of time what to do when a storm occurs can minimize, or even prevent, your intrinsic and/or financial loss. Following are some reminders of what to do (and what not to do) when a storm strikes.

1. Assess the damage – A storm can leave trees looking as if there is no tomorrow. But trees are amazingly resilient, and may be able to recover from what appears to be certain death. Before writing off a damaged tree as a “goner,” determine whether or not it can/should be saved. Is it basically healthy (other than the storm damage)? Are major limbs broken? Has the leader (main stem) been lost? Are at least 50% of the branches and leaves still intact? How large are the wounds? Can the remaining branches form a new branch structure? Is the tree a desirable one for its location? Positive answers to these questions will help you determine whether or not the tree can be saved.
2. Make decisions about the tree – Frequently, damaged trees look worst than they really are. If the tree is a “keeper,” make notes concerning remedial needs, but don't jump into action right away.....
3. Wait and see – Time is on your side. After proper pruning to remove completely broken limbs or branches (for safety's sake), give the tree some time to recover. A final decision to remove can always be made later.
4. Provide first aid right after the storm, mainly for safety purposes (as noted above) – But there are some other things to do that help with recovery: (a) You don't have to do it all yourself. Hire some professional help if necessary, and especially get the professionals to clear any limbs or branches interfering with utility lines. Never mess with these yourself. (b) Repair torn bark patches so callus can start forming correctly. (c) Remove any broken branches still attached to the tree. (d) **DON'T TOP YOUR TREES! Topping just sets them up to be the first victims of the next storm.**
5. Cultivate trees that are the right species for the right place in your landscape, and keep them as healthy as possible, to prevent and/or minimize damage in future storms. There will be more.....count on it.
6. Lastly, watch out for who you hire to work on your trees. There will always be scam artists out to make a quick buck during an emergency situation. Avoid them.



Hiring just anyone who shows up at your door may result in fatal damage to your trees. It's best to go with a qualified professional arborist.

—National Arbor Day Foundation illustration