

## **Plant Care after the Storm**

By Jane Morse, University of Florida/IFAS, Manatee County Extension Agent

Small trees and shrubs that have been uprooted should be securely staked in their original growing positions. If the plant can not be reset immediately, be sure to protect the exposed root system with soil, moist burlap sacks, or moist sphagnum moss to prevent the roots from drying out. The tree should be reset at ground level with the first major root at the soil line. Some damaged roots may need to be removed for proper resetting.

When staking trees, be sure to use wide strapping or rubber to secure the tree to stakes so that the bark is not injured. Mark the support material with brightly colored material to prevent accidents. The strapping should be adjusted several times during the growing season to prevent injury or girdling to the trunks. All staking and strapping should be removed after one year. Our free publication "Selecting and Planting Trees and Shrubs" has more details on planting and staking. Or see this website: <http://hort.ifas.ufl.edu/woody/planting/subjectindex.htm>

The re-planted tree will need to be re-established. This means that it will need regular deep watering. Trees with less than a two-inch caliper (thickness) need to be watered daily for 2 weeks, then every other day for 2 months, then weekly until established. Trees with a caliper greater than 4 inches must be watered daily for 6 weeks, then every other day for 5 months, then weekly until established. Two to three gallons per inch of trunk caliper should be applied to the root ball each time it is watered. Make sure that all water soaks into the root ball. Don't water if root ball is wet/saturated on watering day.

Broken branches should be removed. Always make clean, even cuts and use clean tools. Cut branches back to major limbs or the main trunk if possible and be sure to cut outside of the branch collar. If all branches have been destroyed, it may be best to remove the plant and replant with a new plant. If plants have lost all or most of their leaves, they will most likely recover.

Plants should have all excess debris removed. Any soil or mud that has been deposited over the root system should be scraped away. It is important to keep the soil grade the same level it was so that the roots can get oxygen. Wash away soil or debris from leaves using a spray of water. Plants that have been submerged may recover, but will need extra care in the coming year. Submerged plants can lose their root systems due to lack of oxygen.

Tender plants exposed to salt-air or salt-water should be washed and watered with fresh water immediately. Be sure to wash off all the leaves with a spray of fresh water. St. Augustine grass is very salt tolerant and can tolerate some salt water. Many native beach plants will be fine with no extra care. Some excellent salt-tolerant native plants include Florida privet, Simpson's stopper, saw palmetto, necklace pod, muhly grass, maypop, beach sunflower, live oak, cabbage palm,

gopher apple, sea grape and coral bean to name a few. If you lose plants to salt with this storm, you may want to replant with a salt-tolerant native beach plant.

For more information on any of these subjects, call the University of Florida/IFAS Manatee County Extension Service at 722-4524 and ask to speak to a Master Gardener (available Monday-Friday, 9 AM to 4 PM). We have lots of FREE publications to help you.

Please note: All mail sent to and from Manatee County Government is subject to the Public Records Law of Florida.

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