



# After the Storm

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**M**other Nature can wreak havoc not only on forestland but on homeowners as well. Whether by tornadoes or hurricanes or snow or ice, weather damage to trees can be very costly. If you have experienced storm damage, assessing the damage to your trees should be your first step.

Obviously trees blown down or broken at the main stem will have to be removed. But what about those trees still standing?

Here are some of the types of damage to look for: broken branches, torn bark, partially uprooted trees or leaning trees, and lightning damage.

Repairing the damage now can reduce the chance of insect attack or invasion of disease organisms. Violently broken limbs can cause torn or stripped bark and expose the cambium. The cambium is the thin layer of living tissue beneath the bark where growth occurs. This type wound provides easy access to the cambium for a variety of organisms not otherwise able to penetrate the bark.

To improve appearance and hasten wound closure, carefully use a chisel or sharp knife to trim ragged edges of the dead or dying bark. Care should be taken not to expose any additional cambium tissue.

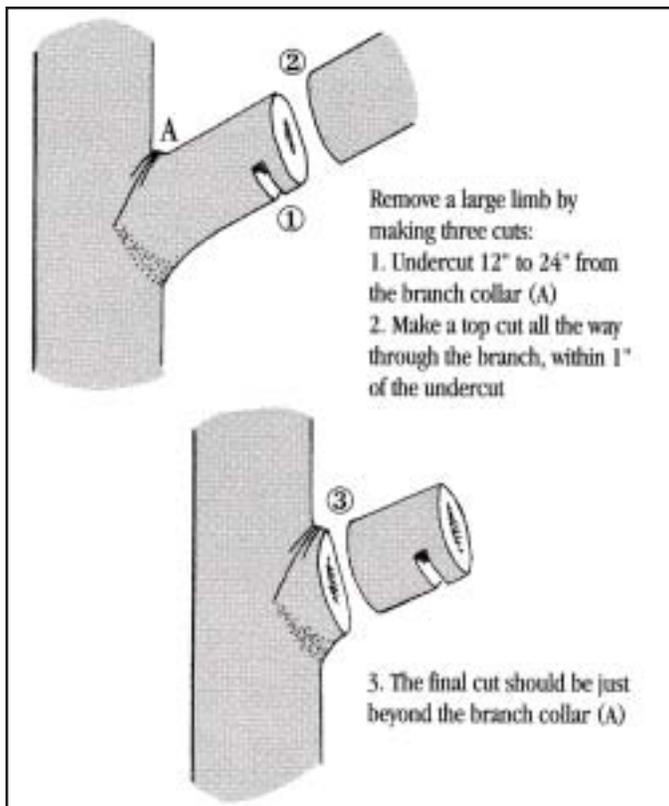
Pruning the jagged remains of broken limbs is a common repair that homeowners can make after a storm. This will reduce the risk of decay pathogens from entering the tree. The proper pruning technique, in most cases, is to cut off the limb stubs where they join the next largest branch or the trunk. Do not simply cut immediately below the break.

While you are pruning broken branches, consideration should be given to pruning limbs on the opposite side. This will help to balance the tree and improve aesthetics. With larger trees or trees in dangerous positions, you should consult a professional tree surgeon or arborist.

When pruning large limbs, care should be taken to prevent the limb from tearing or stripping bark from the trunk. This can be avoided by using a three-step method of pruning. The first cut is a partial cut, made on the lower side of the limb, one or two feet from the trunk. The second cut is made on the top of the branch a few inches out from the first cut. This should allow the limb to fall without stripping the bark back to the trunk. The pruning process is completed by making the third cut next to the trunk, just outside the branch collar.

Young trees that have been uprooted or wind thrown can often be saved. This is accomplished by removing excess soil to allow room for the roots to be placed back in the original location. Raising the tree back up to a vertical position can be accomplished with a come-along or winch. The tree should be properly braced in two or three directions. Cover the wires with rubber or plastic to protect the bark. Water the tree roots fully to remove any air pockets. Then add a fresh layer of mulch 1 to 3 inches deep and extending out 3 to 4 feet. Fertilizing will help, but don't over do it.

The hurricane is gone, but you can minimize the damage done to your prized shade tree with a little tender loving care and the proper techniques. ☘



This diagram illustrates the proper pruning of broken limbs.  
Courtesy of International Society of Arboriculture