



In the garden with Ed...

Winter '08 Edition -

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What's New?

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GLD voted "Best of Gwinnett 2008" for the 2nd year in a row!

Thanks to all of you who voted for us!

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Tree First Aid After a Storm - Tips for dealing with winter storm tree damage

I thought it would be a good idea to share an article published by the USDA Forest Service and the International Society of Arboriculture on what to do if we get one of those wonderful "Atlanta Ice Storms" this winter. You don't need this right now - BUT - You may want to keep this handy - just in case. You could save yourself a lot of money by using these techniques to save a tree or two in your yard vs having us come in and remove / replace a tree that could have been saved! I like money - but I like you better (see - the Christmas Spirit is alive and well!)

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.

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. The National Arbor Day Foundation urges home and property owners to follow a few simple rules in administering tree first aid after a storm:

1. **Don't try to do it all yourself.** If large limbs are broken or hanging, or if high climbing or

overhead chainsaw work is needed, it's a job for a professional arborist. They have the necessary equipment and knowledge needed, and are generally listed in the telephone directory under "Tree Service." Or - you can go to <http://www.georgiaarborist.org/> for a list of Certified Arborists in Georgia. If all else fails just call me - I have a couple of professional arborists that I've worked with who can help you.

2. **Take safety precautions.** Look up and look down. Be on the alert for downed power lines and dangerous hanging branches that look like they're ready to fall. Stay away from any downed utility lines, low-voltage telephone or cable lines and even fence wires can become electrically charged when there are fallen or broken electrical lines nearby. Don't get under broken limbs that are hanging or caught in other branches overhead. And, unless you really know how to use one, leave chainsaw work to the professionals.
3. **Remove any broken branches still attached to the tree.** Removing the jagged remains of smaller sized broken limbs is one common repair that property owners can make after a storm. If done properly, it will minimize the risk of decay agents entering the wound. Smaller branches should be pruned at the point where they join larger ones. Large branches that are broken should be cut back to the trunk or a main limb by an arborist. For smaller branches, follow the pruning guidelines shown in the illustration so that you make clean cuts in the right places, helping the tree to recover faster. (*see Illustration 1*)
4. **Repair torn bark.** To improve the tree's

appearance and eliminate hiding places for insects, carefully use a chisel or sharp knife to smooth the ragged edges of wounds where bark has been torn away. Try not to expose any more of the cambium (greenish inner bark) than is necessary, as these fragile layers contain the tree's food and water lifelines between roots and leaves. (*see Illustration 2*)

5. **Resist the urge to overprune.** Don't worry if the tree's appearance isn't perfect. With branches gone, your trees may look unbalanced or naked. You'll be surprised at how fast they will heal, grow new foliage, and return to their natural beauty.

6. **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 a 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 regrowth. 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. (*see Illustration 3*)

Cutline:
Because
of its
weight a
branch
can tear
loose
during
pruning,
stripping
the bark
and
creating
jagged
edges
that
invite

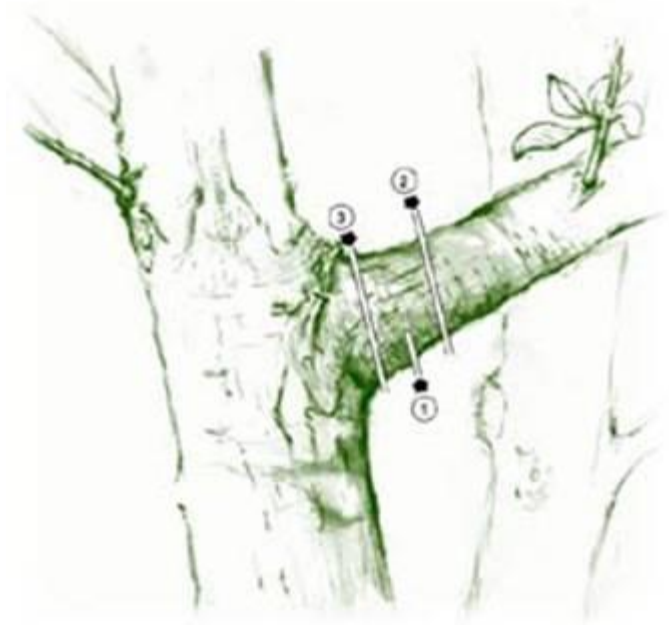


Illustration 1

insects and disease. That won't happen if you follow these steps:

1. Make a partial cut from beneath, at a point several inches away from the trunk.
2. Make a second cut from above several inches out from the first cut, to allow the limb to fall safely.
3. Complete the job with a final cut just outside the branch collar, the raised area that surrounds the branch where it joins the trunk.

Cutline:
Smoothing the ragged edge of torn bark helps the wound heal faster and eliminates hiding places for insects.



Illustration 2

Cutline:
Never cut the main branches of a tree back to stubs. Ugly, weakly attached limbs will often grow back higher than the original branches and be more likely to break off in a future storm.



Illustration 3

Winter Pruning Knockout Roses

Ok - so your Knockout Roses that caused Tour Busses to stop in front of your home this summer are looking a little ragged right now. Well - they need some rest in order to get ready for next spring's showtime! Knockouts are tough little plants - and can take quite a pruning at this time of year. A general rule of thumb is that you can cut them back by as much as 1/3 without hurting them. In fact - this will encourage a stronger, healthier plant and more blooms in the spring. First - take a look at the plant, and carefully prune out any dead or wild / sideways growing branches. Next - take a look at the general shape of the plant and prune back to the inside of the plant to reach the desired shape. Don't forget - new spring growth will come out quite a bit further than your cutting site - so prune deeper into the plant than you want to have the new branches reach come spring. I've actually cut my Knockouts back by as much as $\frac{1}{2}$ in their 2nd year of growth and found that they will double their winter size by June. Use a very sharp pair of hand pruning clippers - and clean the blades with bleach after you're done to prevent nurturing any bacteria for the next time you use them. And - this goes without saying - but I'll say it anyway - DO NOT - use the old "Binford 2000" hedge trimmers - this just tears up the branch tips and encourages disease. DO - use heavy leather garden gloves. I've gotten more than my fair share of rose thorns imbedded under my skin - and those little buggers hurt like *&\$^%#^%# and can sit under your skin for months!

Winter Pruning Ornamental Grasses

If you have any of the many varieties of Ornamental Grasses in your landscape you may be wondering if/when to prune them back. For the most part these grasses not only look great in the warm months - but can actually stand out and look their best in the drab landscape months of winter. Many have plumes or stalks that add winter interest and color to the landscape at this time of the year. But - not everyone likes to

see them as they begin to droop and dry in the winter wind. I recommend that you resist the temptation to give them a crew cut until mid to late January - and February is even better. What we don't want is to cut them back and then get a week-long warm spell that starts them growing - only to be hit by three weeks of freezing weather. When you do cut these back the general rule of thumb is to give them a crew-cut with a sharp pair of pruning shears - although you can use a very sharp pair of hedge clippers if you just clip small clumps from the outside in. Some people have not pruned these grasses properly - and found a "halo" of green grass around a dead center in the spring. This is the result of not cutting the grass clump down to 6" - 8" tall each February. Unless most of the clump is removed each winter, the center fills with dying stems and debris and it loses the ability to put up new sprouts. PS - the same caution here with regard to leather garden gloves. Many, many of these grasses have very, very sharp serrated edges on their fronds. Don't be fooled - these little suckers can slice you like a "Ginsu" knife as you pull up the clippings - so be careful.

Winter Pruning Crape Myrtles

OK - This is an annual topic that has advocates on both sides of the pruning fence. Some folks commit "Crape Murder" and cut all of the branches back to the trunk. Others (this is where I am in this debate) will prune back the branches to provide the framework for next summer's growth and eventual shape. I've provided some pictures below of properly trimmed Crape Myrtles - at least in my book. Bottom line - you really can't hurt these trees - they're cast iron in the plant world - but - if you prune them too much it will tend to encourage white flies / black spot in the late spring. Best time to prune - mid to late February here in Atlanta.






The end...

OK - enough for this newsletter - you're probably asleep by now!

For those of you who celebrate Christmas - a very Merry Christmas from all of us at GLD - and our best wishes to all



for a wonderful New Year. You guys have helped make 2008 a great year for my family and the families of our crews. For this we thank you so very much. We're fortunate to have some of the best clients I could ever have hoped for - and we hope we can continue to serve you in the coming years.

If you have any specific questions on your plants please don't hesitate to call me. I'm always here to help.

Let us know if this was helpful - or if you'd like to be removed from our mailing list. And once again - Thanks for being a client - and for all of the great referrals - we really appreciate you. What I say means nothing but what you say about us means everything!

ed & the GLD team

Newsletter design, graphics and editing by Jeanine Szczesniak - GLD.