

## Caring for Damaged Trees and Landscape Plants

- **Sheila Dunning, Florida Yards & Neighborhoods**

Young trees, small trees, trees with a good framework and least damaged trees are most worth salvaging. Tilted trees are in no immediate danger, but should be repaired as soon as possible.

A tree's age will largely determine its ability to recover from damage. A young, vigorous tree will be more likely to survive than an older one. Damage to trees may include fallen trees, broken and torn limbs, wounds, split branches, uprooting, weakening and exposed roots.

In general, it is best to reset only small trees since large trees will be weakened and may fall again, perhaps damaging property. If roots are one-third to one-half exposed, saving the tree is difficult.

To reset trees, dig a hole as wide and deep as necessary to replace roots exactly where they were. Get stakes and hose-covered wire or rubber tubing ready for anchoring. Each tree will need at least 3 guy lines. With a steady pull, lift tree to a vertical position. Do not twist the tree while raising it. Tamp soil firmly around the roots and anchor the tree securely by placing stakes or anchors (buried at least 18 inches) so that ordinary winds from any direction will not make the tree sway. Finally, mulch the trees to prevent excessive drying of roots.

If a tree is to be removed, decide what to do with tree stumps. If you are going to leave them, cut them off flush with the ground. If you plan to remove them, leave 4 feet of stump standing. Removal will be cheaper and easier if the stump can be pulled, rather than dug out.

Broken and damaged limbs of a tree can affect the shape as well as the general health of the tree. Prune the tree properly to avoid additional damage. Do this by removing the broken or torn limbs to avoid unnecessary bark stripping. Cut the limb just above the branch collar or ridge between the limb and trunk. Do not make a cut flush with the trunk or branch, as this can prevent the tree from healing the pruning wound. For large and difficult pruning jobs and to ensure the health of your tree contact an ISA Certified Arborist to do the work for you.