

# CHRIS' CORNER



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## Storm Damaged Trees

Happy New Year! This year has gotten off to a wet and stormy start in the South. In parts of Alabama and Mississippi, they have already experienced tornadoes. It is hard to imagine tornadoes in January. After seeing the pictures of the devastation, I noticed many damaged trees. This, in turn, led me to thoughts of caring for storm-damaged trees.

Please be careful when assessing trees that have been damaged after storms. Damaged trees are probably unstable and may pose a potential hazard. You should check those trees carefully for cracks in major limbs, cracks in the trunk and broken branches. If you have trees damaged by a storm consider the following steps after the storm has passed:

1. **Determine whether the damaged tree should be removed.** Major limbs that are dead or have major cracks in them should be removed as quickly as possible. They pose a hazard to people and property.
2. **Remove hanging or broken branches.** Wind, ice, and heavy rains can break branches, wash away mulch and erode soil from the plant's roots. These damaged or, in some cases, dead branches should be removed to allow the plant time to recover. Be sure to make clean pruning cuts back to lateral branches to help them seal properly. Proper pruning will help prevent insect and disease problems from developing.
3. **Wait before fertilizing the damaged tree.** It is best to hold off on fertilizing unless you are certain that the tree is deficient in a particular nutrient. Do not fertilize before the tree starts to grow and the crown regains what was lost.
4. **Hire a Certified Arborist.** Go to the ISA website ([www.isa-arbor.com](http://www.isa-arbor.com)) to find a certified arborist in your area. They are trained to know exactly how to care for storm damaged trees. We are fortunate to have some great tree service companies in this area.

Follow these steps and you may be able to save and preserve your storm damaged trees. Again, be careful when assessing trees that have been damaged. Until next time, happy gardening!



*Christopher Cooper*