



FYN Garden Q & A Series

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Yards & Neighborhoods



FYN Topic: Damaged Mahogany Tree

Question: I have a mahogany tree that recently lost a large limb. About 3 1/2 years old, it has been fertilized each spring with tree spikes driven into the ground at the drip line. The tree is watered by hand weekly and twice weekly with a sprinkler system. What can I do to prevent other large limbs from breaking? Should the "raw" area be patched or covered with something or braced in some way? Suzie J. via email

Answer: I suspect there is more going on than just a lack of fertilizer or water. Instead of having strong branch unions, your tree has co-dominant branches that push each other apart as they grow. Mahogany trees, in general, are known for that problem. Corrective pruning and training prior to you receiving the tree could have strengthened the tree's branching structure. You have few options now. You already have substantial damage to the main trunk. Wound decay can't be prevented using any wound dressing. Moisture will find a way to enter and start to rot. More often than not, bracing will do little to strengthen the remaining branches. Over the coming years a certified arborist may be able to properly prune what's left of the tree. But no amount of water and fertilizer can fix your tree's problem. I suggest having the tree removed and replaced before the start of hurricane season on June 1. Future fertilizer applications should be broadcast over the root zone and beyond the drip line using a granular, slow-release fertilizer like 15-0-10. Once established (3-5 years) most trees growing in a landscape with shrubs and surrounded by lawn do not need additional fertilizer from what's used annually on the lawn. Watering a mahogany tree of this size is not really necessary.



Co-dominant branch damage

Useful Links

<http://www.floridayards.org>
<http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu>
<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/>
<http://gardeningolutions.ifas.ufl.edu>

Thomas Becker is an extension agent for the Florida Yards and Neighborhoods (FYN) program at the Lee County Extension Service. Submit questions by calling the Horticulture Help Desk at 239-533-7504 between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. or by emailing Extgardener@leegov.com. Visit his Web page at <http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/FYN/FYNHome.shtml>

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