



## FYN Topic: Prepare Trees for Hurricane Season

**Question:** How do I get my tropical trees ready for a hurricane? I lost most of my fruit trees during hurricane Charley. Doug, Pine Island

**Answer:** Forecasters are predicting an "above normal" and possibly an extremely active hurricane season. Trees account for ≈20 percent of the storm damage to structures during a hurricane or tropical storm. A cubic foot of pine branch weighs 52 pounds. A ten foot long branch can deliver as much as one ton of force capable of puncturing the roof deck and/or damaging the trusses. Some native tree species survive storms better, require minimal pruning right before a hurricane and stay strong with age. UF/IFAS researchers list one native tree worth trying. Lychee is a good, wind resistant tropical fruit tree. Good ornamental tree species include baldcypress, crape myrtle, and dahoon holly.

Check each one of your trees right now. Look for signs of structural weaknesses: bark that's falling off, poor branch angles (too close), root rot and internal trunk decay. Tropical fruit trees, in general, will be short-lived with or without hurricane winds in Florida. Exceptions do occur. Older trees are always the most prone to wind damage. Florida maple, live oak, winged elm, seagrape, cocoplum, gumbo limbo and several others have good wind resistance as they age.

Any trees that had their roots cut during construction are likely to fail as well as trees that were repeatedly topped and improperly pruned. Finally, examine each tree's leaf canopy. Can the canopy be thinned out or made less dense by removing small branches from the outer edge of the canopy? Learn how to assess and prepare your landscape for hurricane winds: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/EP/EP29100.pdf>

## Useful Links

<http://www.floridayards.org>  
<http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu>  
<http://edis.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](mailto:Extgardener@leegov.com). Visit his Web page at <http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/FYN/FYNHome.shtml>

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