



FYN Garden Q & A Series

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Yards & Neighborhoods



FYN Topic: Tree Burls

Question: Can I save my big, old powderpuff tree? It seems to have a fungus-like, bulbous growth along some branches. They aren't mushy, but look like dark extensions of the bark. Some parts of the tree have died while other more central branches continue to grow leaves and flowers. Even though we had the tree cut back right after Hurricane Charley in 2004, the problem didn't appear until after Hurricane Wilma in 2005. (I'm a fifth generation native Floridian. My grandmother could grow anything, and knew every plant you could show her, My great-uncle was a horticulturist for Thomas Edison. That said, I can't seem to grow a philodendron successfully.) Can I help my tree?

Martha M., Ft Myers

Answer: It is unlikely that your powderpuff tree's slow decline since 2006 was caused by these disfiguring, bulbous growths. Your description makes me think you have a secondary problem known on many types of trees as tree burls. Burls often appear as random, abnormal swellings along a trunk or major branch. In your case, large sections of a branch may be affected. Causes of burls are poorly understood but branches broken after a hurricane, insect damage, and any other sorts of distress to a tree may be their cause. Consult with an ISA Certified Arborist. A tree professional may see a primary cause for the old tree's decline. Other causes include: a winter sustained cold injury, over-pruning or root problems like roots hidden underground.

freeze or
circling



Tree Burl

Useful Links

<http://www.floridayards.org>
<http://fyn.ifas.ufl.edu>
<http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/>
<http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/FYN/FYNHome.shtml>
<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 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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