



After the Storm Landscape Tips

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Happy riddance to Irma, and hopefully all her friends will stay away for the rest of the hurricane season, which does not end until November 30! If you have any landscape at all to maintain, it has likely suffered some leaf and stem damage from the high winds and salt spray during the storm, as well as root damage after the hurricane due to flooding and standing water. Here are some tips that will help you get your landscape back into shape before the fall.

1. **Scorched or Burned plants** – During the high winds, moisture was whipped off of leaf surfaces and dried them out. Leaves will die and drop off as if it were a response seen during fall weather. New leaves will flush out over the next couple of weeks to months, so be patient and do not do any drastic pruning before you know if the stem or branch is truly dead.
2. **Salt damage** – Salt in the air or in storm water will burn leaves and branches and, if leached into the soil, will interfere with the plant's ability to take up nutrients. Most of the leaves and stems are suffering from a combination of salt and wind burn. Spray the above ground portions of your plants that appear burnt by salt with fresh water. Salt in the soil can also prevent uptake of water by the roots and the plant can become dehydrated. Wash the salt residue past the root system by saturating the soil a few times during the first week or two after the storm. **Long term concerns:** Too much salt in the soil can change its pH, altering the plant's ability to take up nutrients. If plants do not recover over time, a soil sample might need to be tested to determine if the pH has changed. Call the Master Gardener Volunteer clinic desk at (772) 226-4324 for more information.
3. **Uprooted trees** - Large trees that are uprooted need to be tended to immediately. If their roots are exposed for long periods, they will dry out and die. Trees and shrubs should be straightened and staked up while the ground is still relatively wet. They should be treated as if they are newly transplanted and left with supports for at least 3 months to ensure they are stabilized again. Larger trees may have blown over because their root system was not extensive, nor strong enough to withstand high winds. If major roots have been damaged due to uprooting, it is unlikely that the trees will reestablish themselves and should be removed.
4. **Leaning trees** - A tree that is leaning should be treated the same as one that has been uprooted. Those that are 4 inches or less in diameter are also significantly easier to restore to an upright position. If you have a tree that naturally grew in a leaning position, it is safe until the angle is greater than 40 degrees.
5. **Physical damage** - Trees generally receive a lot of battering during a wind event and can end up with split/cracked trunks and many broken branches. Most trees with split trunks should be removed. A certified and licensed arborist can brace and cable a cracked tree, but this treatment is very expensive and generally not recommended. Broken branches should be assessed and pruned to restore the health and safety of the tree. Proper pruning techniques are discussed further at <http://ufdc.ufl.edu/IR00002901/00001>

6. **Palms** – Palms are not trees at all, and are more closely related to grasses with their growing portion at the top of the plant and in the middle of the crown. If you find that this structure has been damaged, the palm probably will not survive. Broken or hanging fronds should be removed by trimming or cutting, and never by pulling on them manually. Remember that palm fronds supply the plant with food and only brown fronds should be removed.
7. **Structural Damage** - High winds can create long-term internal structural damage to shrubs and trees. Do not be surprised if, over the next 10 years or so, you notice shortened lifespans on different species in your landscape. They may die quicker than expected even though they did not show much damage after their initial recovery.
8. **Lawns** – Prolonged flooding of lawns reduce the roots access to oxygen, causing dieback and increased susceptibility to pests and diseases. Turf areas under water for more that 4-6 days may not recover and need complete reestablishment. Once water has receded, turf can be lightly fertilized before the end of October with ½-1 lb. of nitrogen per 1000 sq. ft. See UF/IFAS recommendations at <http://hort.ifas.ufl.edu/yourfloridalawn/>
9. **Pests & Diseases** – Due to the weakened state of turfgrass and landscape plants, they will be much more susceptible to pests and diseases in the coming months. To help protect them through this period it is important to follow proper best management practices and not to over-fertilize, over-irrigate or prune severely. When a problem does appear, do not wait--call the Master Gardener Volunteer hotline (772) 266-4324 or visit one of the plant clinics listed at the end of this document.
10. **Mulch** - While you are already in the yard, take this opportunity to replenish and redistribute mulch that was carried away by driving rains and flooding. Install hearty fall bedding plants appropriate for your specific site conditions. For more information on what to do and plant each month, please see the Central Florida Gardening Calendar at: <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/pdffiles/EP/EP45000.pdf>

When a problem does appear, or for more information and other timely tips on what to do in your Florida Yard and Garden, please contact the **Indian River County Florida Master Gardeners** at (772) 226-4330 x 1 or email ircmg1@gmail.com You can also stop by one of our clinics:

Vero Beach office
 1800 27th St.
 Bldg B, 2nd Floor
 Vero Beach, FL 32960
 Monday-Friday
 9am-12pm and 1:00pm-4:00pm

North County Library
 1001 Sebastian Blvd
 Sebastian, FL 32958
 Wednesdays, 10am-12pm

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