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**GIVE YOUR TREES AND PALMS A LITTLE TLC**

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Aransas County residents love their trees! We (Texas A&M AgriLife Extension-Aransas County) have received numerous calls asking if a tree or palm can be saved. First, do not be in a hurry! As long as the tree will not do any damage if it falls, there is no need to take much action any time soon.

Most oak and other trees will survive if less than 40% of the roots are out of the ground. That is just a rule of thumb, and I always advise trying to save a tree whenever possible. Single trunk palms, like sabals, and California and Mexican fan palms die if their crown is destroyed, as many were by Harvey. But, some will surprise us; sometimes everything visible is brown, but the crown is alive and the new shoot just isn’t visible yet. So, again, don’t be in a hurry.

Give all your large plants at least until March or April to see what will happen. And, water them deeply every few weeks starting now. We are going on 12 weeks since Hurricane Harvey hit and we’ve only received one good rain in that time. The trees and palms would really benefit from a deep watering and a light application of a complete fertilizer, and some compost if possible. A complete fertilizer contains nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P), and potassium (K). Spread the fertilizer and/or compost under as much of the canopy as you can. Many of the palms that I see around the county are in particular need of some nitrogen and some potassium.

Deep-rooted plants of all types: trees, palms, shrubs, grass, etc. are more drought and storm tolerant. So, water thoroughly, soaking the soil to at least 4 inches deep, but do not water frequently. For established trees and palms, every three weeks is ideal at this time of year. (However, if the roots have been pushed up out of the ground, water once a week, more if the weather is clear and sunny). Water shrubs and grass every two weeks.

Leave any small shoots that are growing anywhere on the branch or trunk for now, even if they are very low. The tree needs those leaves to make food. The ones on the trunk can be removed in the spring if desired.

November through January is a good time to make clean cuts on branches that were broken in the storm. If that hasn’t made it to the top of your likely long “to do list”, just get to it when you can but avoid pruning oaks between February and June due to the threat of oak wilt disease. Try to make the cuts at the nearest lateral branch, bud or main trunk, rather than in the middle of a branch. But since our trees have been damaged so badly, use your best judgement, and try not to cut off any more than necessary.

Sharp tools are needed to make nice cuts. Clean your tools with a 10% bleach solution, rubbing alcohol or household cleaner, especially if the wood shows any signs of disease such as discoloration.

Plants are resilient and most will regrow. It may take some time and patience, as most things seem to post-Harvey. A little help on our part will go a long way.

*Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service - Aransas County Office is located at 892 Airport Road in Rockport. AgriLife Extension education programs serve people of all ages, regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, handicap or national origin.*