

Help your trees survive storm damage

Severe storms can cause considerable damage to even the strongest trees. But just because a tree has been damaged doesn't necessarily mean that it is lost.

With proper care and pruning, you can help minimize the damage and prolong the life of your trees. To help you, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) offers the following tips on how you can nurse your storm-damaged trees back to health:

- Cut off all broken branches close to the mother branch or trunk beyond the ridge of bark at the branch attachment. To prevent disease and decay, it is important to make sure that you cut a straight, clean edge.

- Avoid cutting too close or too flush to the trunk as this could expose the tree to infection and organisms that cause decay.

- For smaller trees, place the blade of curved pruning shears so that it cuts upwards or diagonally, not down.

- Branches more than 2.5 centimetres (about one inch) in diameter should be cut with a saw. If you are using a chain saw be very careful as it can easily injure you or damage living bark on the tree.

- To remove limbs more than five cm (about two inches) in diameter, make three cuts to avoid splitting the branch or tearing the bark. First, cut about one-quarter of the way through the branch from the bottom, 30 to 60 cm (one to two feet) out from the branch attachment. Next, saw through the top of the branch another 2.5 cm (about one inch) out from

the first cut until the limb breaks off. Lastly, saw off the remaining stub just

beyond the outer portion of the branch collar. This is the thick area where the branch connects to the trunk.

- Remove torn or damaged bark using a sharp wood chisel, gouge or pruning knife. Cut the loose bark back at right angles to the surface of the wound until you reach firm, healthy bark. Then smooth the bark and ensure that the bottom is tapered rather than squared-off so that it won't trap water and debris.

- To maintain the health and vigour of the tree carry out a rigorous schedule of irrigation and fertilization throughout the season.

Painting, dressing or sealing wounds have all been found to be of little or no value in hastening wound closure or preventing decay.

- If the work is out of easy reach, hire a certified professional to do the job, and make sure that the cleanup cuts are made properly. If any branches are near or touching electricity wires, report the problem to your electrical utility and wait for their trained staff to remove the branches for you.

For more information or a free copy of the "About Your House" fact sheet Helping Your Trees Survive Storm Damage or other fact sheets on virtually every facet of owning, maintaining or renovating your home, ask CMHC at 1-800-668-2642 or visit our website at www.cmhc.ca.

For more than 60 years, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) has been Canada's national housing agency, and a source of objective, reliable housing expertise.



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