

Column Name- The Heartland Minute

By: Lindsay Shorter

K-State Research and Extension Greenwood County

Agriculture Extension Agent

"Managing Storm-Damaged Trees"

Spring and summer time in Kansas usually means lots of things. Usually it means lots of sunshine, school wrapping up, and all the fun summer activities beginning. Although, some of those may look a bit differently this summer. One thing that will remain the same however, is that with spring and summer arriving so does our Kansas thunderstorm season. Severe weather is a fact of life in Kansas, and with that, comes concern for maintaining our healthy trees after a storm comes through and wrecks havoc. While we cannot make the storms stop here in Kansas, there are a few things you can think through to help manage storm damaged trees.

The first question you may be asking yourself after you've found a damaged tree after a thunderstorm, does your tree need to be removed or can it be rehabilitated? Here are a few points to keep in mind when deciding whether to rehabilitate or remove your storm-damaged tree:

- Use common sense and ask yourself if the damaged tree now hosts a hazardous condition. Meaning, does it not look vulnerable to any additional winds that could easily cause the tree to lose larger branches or the entire tree all together.
- Educate yourself as to the potential growth rate and commercial availability of replacement trees.
- Even if the tree can be salvaged, assess whether it will look "right" again with some semblance of symmetry.
- If significant bark has been ripped or loosened from the trunk, be realistic about the tree's potential for attack from opportunistic microorganisms and damaging insects.

If you answer a few of the questions above, and determine the tree is worth saving, many times you will need to prune the tree. Proper pruning is critical to facilitate quick wound response by the tree, or "compartmentalization". Compartmentalization results in the isolation of microorganisms or barriers to insects to prevent them from causing further damage to the tree.

So, how do you properly prune? First, remove all broken or damaged limbs that could be hazardous. Never remove more than one-third of the branching system of any tree. If more than one-third of the branches have been damaged, consider tree removal rather than salvage. Cut limbs back to a lateral branch that is nearly one-half the diameter of the removed limb. If you have questions on tree pruning check out this publication:

<https://bookstore.ksre.ksu.edu/pubs/c550.pdf>

As always, if you have questions about tree health, reach out to the Greenwood County Extension office and we would be happy to assist you!

****We know that our world continues to change throughout this time dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, but one thing that will remain the same is K-State Research and Extension's mission to serve and educate our local Kansas communities. We are asking our clientele to first reach out to our office through distance technology (Phone, email, or web based video), to see if we can assist you distantly in those manners. If however, we cannot answer your questions utilizing these technologies, we are offering socially distanced appointments with staff members. Please contact the Greenwood County Extension office to set up an appointment. Our office is available via phone (office number is 620-583-7455) or by email at lindsayshorter@ksu.edu. Be sure to follow K-State Research and Extension- Greenwood County on Facebook for the most up-to-date information on Extension education and our Greenwood County 4-H program.****