

# *Your Yard and Hurricane Charley*

## HURRICANE CHARLEY AND YOUR LANDSCAPING

Without overstating the obvious, we have never seen this much damage and injury to our homes and landscapes. Hurricane Charley exacted a toll we hope not to see again for 40 more years.

But for now, we have to deal with the aftermath. The first part of which is the immediate clean up of damaged limbs and fallen trees. Of course, anything that is broken, unstable or obviously not going to survive should be removed or trimmed to the point where there is no hazard remaining. We are visiting all our properties and evaluating whether the damaged landscaping 1) Can or should be cleaned up by the homeowner, 2) cleaned up by us or 3) if a professional tree service is required. If a tree service is needed, we are bringing in our tree guys and giving prices. It is up to the homeowner to decide if they want to go with this proposal or seek out another on their own.

We estimate it will take 2 to 3 more weeks for most of the storm damage to be cleaned up and longer in some cases for tree services to get completely caught up. Most of our customers are understanding, some are not – that's the joy of being in the service business.

If you are worried about your plants surviving, or what the long-term effects are going to be, here are a few suggestions:

Generally, if a plant is blown over or leaning at an angle and it is still green and not turning crispy brown, it should be ok to stand up and stake it. If the leaves are turning brown or a majority of its leaves have popped off, it's probably not going to make it or its removal should be considered.

We are going to see windburn and salt burn show up over the next few weeks. Depending on your location and your proximity to the water, wind and salt burn looks like the leaves have been scorched. It would not be unusual for one side of the plant to be more affected than the other. Citrus in particular are susceptible to a disease called scorched. This is caused by winds over 40 mph or so (and did we get those!), damaging the tissues of the twigs and small branches while they are still green and not yet covered with bark. This causes twigs and small branches to die back and then, of course, they can't support leaves so the tree looks worse than it really is. Within a short period of time, buds will develop and pop new growth where the tissue is healthy and the plant can then be trimmed for cosmetic appearances. We have seen this occur on other fast growing soft tissue plants such as Hibiscus, Ixora,

Bougainvillea and a lot of others. The damage is the same as if you drove down the highway with your plants unprotected in the back of a truck. Wait to trim wind damage until the plant is recovering and has produced new growth.

As far as what we need to do for our plantings now – not much. We have finished our summer feedings before Charley struck so we won't need to feed again before fall. Chemical fertilizers should be withheld until plants show new growth and any root damage has healed. Fortunately we are in our rainy season so we've had rain and this takes some urgency away from having to irrigate. If your yard doesn't get rain for about 5 days, consider turning on your sprinklers. It is important your plants don't dry out too much but on the other hand, we don't want to keep them too wet. Use your judgment.

Here is something interesting we've observed: Certain shade loving plants in our yard are no longer in shade and are getting sunburned. We have to deal with the fact our shade canopy is gone in places and reconsider what type of trees we use as replacements.

Over the next couple of weeks, we will begin to have an idea to the extent of the damage and can consider what new landscaping is needed to fix what was lost. We would be happy to set up an appointment and together review your landscaping and discuss new plantings.

We hope these suggestions are helpful and will be of some practical use. Please, if you have any specific questions, just give us a call at 239-267-2847.