



CYRNEY SCOTT/Staff Photographer

In West Palm Beach, John Hyde trims broken ficus branches from a neighbor's overgrown trees. Thinning the interior of the tree's canopy before the storm would probably have diminished the damage.

■ **Keep exposed roots covered, damp**

You need to keep roots protected until you can reset your uprooted tree. Even if you haven't done so yet, you may still have a chance to save your tree because of this week's frequent rain. Your goal is to prevent the roots from drying out, particularly the tiny root hairs, which are a tree's source of water and nutrients. Larger roots are mainly for support. Don't cut any roots still in the ground.

■ **Cover trunks and major limbs**

Your tree's leaves were like sunscreen — or a long-sleeved shirt. Now that they're blown away, trees will begin to suffer from sun scald (an arboreal version of sunburn), overheating and dehydration. The experts differ on ways to prevent sun scald, but here are suggestions compiled from a variety of sources:

- If your tree is down or leaning, pile brush, soil, a tarp or sphagnum moss on trunk and major limbs.
- Split a length of plastic sewer pipe and slide it on the trunk.
- Spray or brush on

white latex paint (never oil-based), thinned 50/50 with water. (This method is controversial. Some experts say this can seal in fungus, bugs and bacteria next to the bark, eventually damaging the tree more than the sun.)

■ **Pruning**

"Don't be afraid to prune," says Bruce Pearson of Tropical World Nursery in Boynton Beach. "You need to cut back the tree's canopy to compensate for root damage."

You may need to prune just to reduce a tree's weight enough so you can stand it back up. Damaged and dangling limbs also need to be removed, but do not hatrack a tree. (Hattracking is trimming limbs back close to the trunk, creating a leafless tree that looks like a hatrack.)

- To prune larger limbs without risking trunk splitting, use the three-cut method (see Page 3K).
- Trim off any ragged bark.
- Trim the canopy of larger trees back by as much as one-half to two-thirds to reduce water loss and reduce a tree's weight.
- Always trim back to healthy tissue.
- Use sharp implements that make clean, even cuts.
- Do not use pruning paint or wound paint. It can actually attract heat and impede healing. Tree cuts can be painted with copper fungicide.



**DON'T DO THIS:** Mahogany tree that was hatracked by pruners.

■ **Standing the trees back up**

Your goal is to set the tree in soil at the same level it was before the storm. Too shallow, and the roots will dry out. Too deep, and root hairs will suffocate.

- Dig a hole slightly larger than the root ball or the portion of roots that were pulled out of the ground.
- Fill the hole with water.
- Pull the tree up using a rope or cloth sling or the backs of willing friends. (Don't use chains, wires or cables that can break and whiplash bystanders.)
- Tamp in soil around the roots, while spraying ground with the full pressure of a garden hose to eliminate air pockets. Use your foot or a metal pole to firm the soil. Reduce water pressure and keep watering until air bubbles cease.
- Stake trees for support (see Page 3K).



# CAN THESE TREES BE SAVED?

Yes, they can, if you follow these tips from tree experts who have been through another hurricane: Andrew.



DAMON HIGGINS/Staff Photographer

**YES!** These coconuts lining Monroe Drive in West Palm Beach look as sad and droopy as power-starved residents. They can probably be saved by removing bent and broken fronds (as shown at top), and cutting remaining fronds in half, to reduce the tree's need for water and nutrients. New fronds will emerge in a few months.

■ **Water, fertilizer and fungicide**

It is important to gently encourage new growth and inhibit fungus while minimizing tree stress.

**Water:**

Water regularly, but don't allow the roots to stay moist. Remember, your tree has a damaged root system and fewer leaves, and can't use as much water.

**Fungicide:**

The experts differ on the use of fungicides:  
 ■ Don Evans of Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden in Miami says, "It doesn't hurt to drench the soil area with a general broad spectrum fungicide."  
 ■ Carlos Balerdi, commercial tropical fruit crops extension agent for Dade County, suggests using nutritional sprays on citrus once the tree leafs out again. He also recommends sprinkling alkaline soils with ferro sulfate with added EDTA. Use a light application of 3 to 4 ounces per tree, once a month.  
 ■ Mangoes can be sprayed with a light application of copper fungicide.  
 ■ Joel Crippen of Morningstar Nursery suggests spraying the buds of palm trees with fungicide to prevent bud rot, which can kill the tree.

**Fertilizer:**

Again, the experts differ on when to begin fertilizing after replanting a tree:  
 ■ Don Evans of Fairchild says to wait until late fall to fertilize, then apply light applications, perhaps once a month until February or March.  
 ■ Citrus expert Carlos Balerdi says to wait for about a month until leaves begin emerging, then

lightly fertilize citrus. Apply nutritional sprays to citrus when leaves begin expanding and once a week until cold weather begins.

■ Palms are dependent on their leaves to feed themselves, says Morningstar's Joel Crippen. With fronds gone, they need a good specialized palm fertilizer every two weeks.