



## Master Volunteer Guidelines for Disaster Related Tree Care Questions



The following are guidelines concerning how Master Gardeners and Master Naturalist (Master Volunteers-MVs) should respond to requests for help with tree care following a disaster, such as the Central Illinois tornados of November 2013.

### MVs should NOT make recommendations concerning tree removal or repair.

This is outside of the knowledge of most MVs. MV training covers basic pruning but does not provide information on how to assess major tree hazard or other assessment recommendations with potential liability concerns. This should ONLY be left to bonded/insured professionals, such as certified arborists. Other possibilities for homeowners to consider include the following.

- Stress to the clients that whoever is doing the tree work needs to be fully insured. The homeowner should ask to see the insurance policy before anyone starts any type of activity! Otherwise, the homeowner may become liable and that can get serious with chain saws and bucket trucks. Get things in writing. (All that similar stuff with home repair.)
- Local municipal arborists and horticulturists and their unbiased recommendations on trustworthy local tree professionals.
- Under the mutual aid agreement in Illinois, public works employees (i.e. city arborists) from outside the damaged area could be deployed to assist in impacted areas.
- Are any local landscaping companies offering assistance in the impacted area?
- Disaster response groups like the Southern Baptist Disaster Relief, Mennonite Disaster Services, and American Baptist Men often go into a community and do tree work on private property. <http://www.disastercenter.com/agency.htm>
- State foresters referrals
- The U.S. Forest Service has Urban Strike Force Teams that are trained and deployed in disaster relief to assist communities with risk assessment and FEMA with debris identification. [www.ufst.org](http://www.ufst.org)

### Here are some ideas of how MVs CAN help outside of situations with liability concerns.

- During debris cleanup help people understand how to separate the trash so that it is disposed of (and recycled) properly.
- Develop a list of tree and debris removal companies that can do this work.
- Develop a program using accredited list of tree professionals to do tree assessments that mitigate future disasters.
- Assist with damaged trees under the direction (and insurance coverage) of a certified arborist.
- Provide education on how to reestablish landscapes, such as suggesting replacement trees and plants once clean-up has occurred.
- Since insurance payouts seldom cover landscaping, find partners and organize teams to assist homeowners with landscape design and installation.
- Offer water brigades after replanting.

### Large Scale Project Examples

- *Canopy by Design* in Alabama initiated after 2011 tornadoes.  
<http://www.reeis.usda.gov/web/crisprojectpages/0226744-restoring-quality-of-life--canopy-by-design.html>
- *Landscape Revival* after Hurricane Ike <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/recovery/>

### Resources found in Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell Extension's Disaster Blog

[http://web.extension.illinois.edu/fmpt/eb332/category\\_282.html](http://web.extension.illinois.edu/fmpt/eb332/category_282.html)

1. Pruning Storm Damaged Trees – factsheet by Jennifer Fishburn, Horticulture Educator with University of Illinois Extension
2. Tree Hazard Awareness from University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension
3. Checklist for Dealing with Storm Damaged Landscapes, news release by Rhonda Ferree, Horticulture Educator with University of Illinois Extension
4. Prioritize Storm Damaged Tree Care, news release by Rhonda Ferree, Horticulture Educator with University of Illinois Extension
5. Repair Storm Damaged Trees with Care, news release by Rhonda Ferree, Horticulture Educator with University of Illinois Extension (includes links to other resources)
6. Handling Pesticide Containers After a Storm, news release by David Robson, University of Illinois Extension Specialist, Pesticide Safety Education Program

### Sources of Information:

- Monica A David, University of IL Extension Master Gardener Coordinator
- Bill Hoffman, Program & Analysis Officer, USDA/NIFA Office of the Director
- Kerry Smith, Alabama Cooperative Extension System (tornado experience)
- Virginia White is the EDEN POC in Alabama (tornado experience)
- Rick Atterberry, EDEN, University of Illinois Extension
- Steven A. Cain, Purdue University (ice damage experience)
- Barbara Bates, Colorado State (experience rebuilding after fires)
- William M. Johnson, Ph.D., County Extension Agent-Horticulture, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service
- David Robson, University of Illinois Extension Specialist, Pesticide Safety Education Program
- Beverly A Maltsberger, University of Missouri Extension (Joplin tornado)
- Sandy Farber Bandier, University of the District of Columbia Cooperative Extension Service

*Compiled by Rhonda Ferree on December 10, 2013*