

ASK THE AG TEAM, for the week of December 23, 2007

Ice storm damage to trees –by *Tim Baker, Horticulture Specialist, University of Missouri Extension, Daviess County*

When an ice storm causes significant damage to trees, such as we have seen recently in Northwest Missouri, many homeowners will be faced with questions. Can my storm-damaged tree be saved? If so, how should it be repaired? Or do I need to take the tree out?

I have seen a few situations after storms such as this one where the homeowner opted to totally eliminate the tree. Given the species of the tree and the damage that it had received, it was probably the correct choice. But what about those borderline cases? How are decisions to be made?

There are several considerations. First of all, how did the tree appear before the storm? Was it healthy, or did it have major problems? If the tree was on the way out, it may not be worth saving.

Does it present a safety hazard in its present state? Are major limbs broken? Were major portions of the tree removed? What about the central leader? Is it still present? This will affect the shape and future looks of the tree.

Is at least 50% of the tree still intact? If so, and if there are no major structural problems, it may have a good chance at surviving.

What about wounds? Are they large or small? Has the bark been damaged? Are significant portions of bark gone? If problems with wounds or missing bark are minor, the tree may be able to repair the damage and survive. However, significant problems in this area may lead to more difficulties later, including increased disease and insect problems.

Finally, go back to thinking about the tree before the storm. Did you like the tree? Was it suitable in its present location? Was it an appropriate species for the location? If you can't answer these positively, this might be a good excuse to remove the tree.

And I can't stress the safety factor enough. Are there major structural problems from the damage which are hazardous or may lead to future damage? You don't want to take chances here. And some damage may not be readily apparent.

If there is any doubt, I would highly recommend that you consult a professional arborist or experienced tree service company. These people have the expertise to assess structural damage to the tree. Just as important, they have the proper equipment to safely remove hazardous tree limbs and make repairs.

After weighing all these factors, there are three possible outcomes: keep the tree and repair it, take the tree out, or if it's really a borderline case, and you value the tree, you may opt to fix what you can and wait and see if the tree survives. You can always take it out later, if needed.

If you would like more information, please visit my web site where I have placed links to several excellent publications on storm damage to trees, including prevention and treatment. See: <http://extension.missouri.edu/nwregion/hort/index.html>

If you do not have access to the web, please don't hesitate to give me a call at 660-663-3232, and I'll be happy to get copies of these publications to you.

Nematodes cut soybean yields –by *Wayne Flanary, Agronomy Specialist, MU Extension, Holt County*

Soybean yields are often reduced by a hidden pest, soybean cyst nematode. Surveys conducted by the University of Missouri Extension by randomly testing soybean fields indicated that 75% of the fields contain soybean cyst nematode.

Many calls regarding soybean yields have been coming in over the past two weeks as growers have been combining soybeans. Most of the calls are regarding poor yielding soybeans and possible causes. Not all of these are cyst related but now is a good time to take samples to determine if you have this pest in your fields.

Soybean cyst nematode samples are taken like a soil sample. Take the sample seven inches deep and sample many cores to be combined to make up a composite nematode sample. It is best to have about one quart of soil to submit for testing. Try to take a minimum of 12 cores for the composite sample. Also, limit the sample that it does not represent more than 20 acres.

Testing should be conducted on the sample for what is called an egg count. An egg count provides you with information about the level of the pest in the soil. From this information, you can use different strategies to reduce numbers through crop rotation and resistant varieties. Samples that come through the Extension offices vary from none to extremely high which are reducing soybean yields dramatically.

If you have a field that continues to yield poorly and fertility levels are adequate, you may want to sample and determine if this pest is present.