



Barrie Ice Storm- March/April 2025

First Aid Advice for Your Trees.

If you're worried about your trees after the recent ice storm, you're not alone. Trees are part of our families, standing tall for decades, offering shade, beauty, and clean air. Seeing them damaged can be heartbreaking.

As an ISA Certified Arborist, an unabashed life-long tree hugger, and the Executive Director of Living Green Barrie, a registered charity that plants and protects trees, I know firsthand how important it is to support our urban canopy. While planting young trees is essential, protecting mature trees is even more critical—they provide unmatched ecosystem services that benefit us all.

So, what should you do if your tree has been damaged? The right care can mean the difference between survival and losing your tree entirely.

Can Your Tree Be Saved?

Resist the urge to remove a tree unless absolutely necessary. Assess the risk: Does the tree pose a danger to structures, vehicles, or people? If not, it may not be an urgent issue.

Trees provide immense value—clean air, shade, beauty, wildlife habitat, and even mental health benefits. The damaged tree may be looking pretty beat up right now but remember it is a living, resilient organism that is going to take steps to recover over time. You may even grow to love its missing limbs as your tree develops even more character with its battle scars.

If you're unsure whether the damage is too severe, consult a professional. Choose a local company with an ISA Certified Arborist on staff. Keep in mind that tree services are in high demand right now. They must prioritize the most dangerous situations first, so patience is key.

Does Your Tree Just Need Some TLC?

Some trees don't need removal but may require careful pruning and care to recover. Safety

First: Storm-damaged trees are unpredictable and can be dangerous to work on even for professionals. If climbing, ropes, or large branch removal is needed, definitely call a professional. Arborists can do structural pruning using their experience and knowledge of how the tree will react to the cuts.

However, if small, safer, low-hanging branches are broken, you can prune them yourself, but don't overdo it. Trees need time to heal and put out new growth. This year's pruning should just be focused on cleaning up the broken branches. Give it some time to recover before you make any additional unnecessary cuts. Avoid pruning too much in one season and know that mature

trees are less tolerant of excessive pruning than young trees.

DIY Tree First Aid:

If you determine the damage is manageable and safe for you to try to clean up the broken branches, follow these guidelines:

Use the three-cut method for larger broken branches to prevent bark tearing and further damage to the trunk. This method involves making an undercut on the bottom of the broken branch, then a second cut on the top of the branch, (just past your undercut) to remove the weight of the branch you are detaching. The final cut is the cleaning cut where you cut the stub off completely, just outside of the branch collar.

The branch collar is the most important thing to familiarize yourself with before you do any cutting. It is the slightly swollen area where a branch meets the trunk. The branch collar is the tree's natural barrier to decay-causing organisms. This is what the tree will use to form a natural 'scab' over its wound. Inside the collar is a unique barrier called the branch protection zone. This zone has chemical and physical properties that slow the spread of decay into the trunk.

Use sharp tools to make clean cuts—avoid jagged edges that make healing more difficult. Sterilize pruning tools between trees (use 70% isopropyl alcohol or a 10% bleach solution).

Should You Seal the Wound?

Wound dressings (sealants) were once thought to speed healing, but research shows they are unnecessary for most trees. One exception may be oaks because of the threat of Oak wilt; a fungal disease spread by beetles that are attracted to fresh wounds on oak trees. Use a non-toxic pruning sealant or a thin coat of water-based paint. If you notice sap oozing from your maples or birches, don't panic. While messy, it doesn't harm the tree.

Keep Your Trees Healthy Year-Round

Your tree has been through a big battle and will take some time to recover. Give it some year-round TLC to bolster its strength and let it recover.

Focus on root care: Water during droughts, mulch properly, and avoid any activity around the tree that compacts the soil. Protect trees from mechanical damage (lawnmowers, string trimmers, etc.).

Plan(t) for the future.

If your big mature tree has taken a big hit from this storm, consider planting its replacement now. Just like in the forest, small shade-tolerant species like maples or hemlock will establish their roots and grow slowly under the big trees until those trees fall and open up the sunlight for their time to grow big.

Final optimistic thoughts:

If this storm had hit later in the season, when buds had broken dormancy, recovery would be more difficult. Fortunately, trees are incredibly resilient.

Native trees suited to this region of the world are likely going to be more resilient than non-native trees. Living Green Barrie will be holding a Native Tree and Shrub sale in June and is planning several community tree planting events across our city you can join. Follow us on social media, join our newsletter or go to www.livinggreenbarrie.com to register for a planting event today.

Your trees are worth the effort. With patience and proper care, they'll continue to stand strong for years to come.

