



## Repairing tree injury is important for overall tree health

Trees are a valuable aspect of any landscape. They not only look good and provide visual interest, but they also provide shade in the summer and can block cold winter winds. Because of these benefits, it's in a homeowner's best interest to take proper care of them.

Trees can become damaged in various ways, including ice and wind storms, as well as through disease. Injuries to trees that expose wood or kill bark can allow insects or disease organisms to enter the tree. Proper and timely treatment protects the tree and promotes faster healing.

Trees are a lot like children – it's rare they reach maturity without an injury here and there; however, trees don't heal like a scraped knee or a black eye. Injured tree tissue isn't repaired and returned to its original state. Instead, trees react by closing the wound and compartmentalizing or isolating the injured tissue from surrounding tissue. During this process, contents from the injured cells leak onto the uninjured surface where they oxidize and form a barrier to prevent further infection.

Next, the most recently laid down wood is altered, along with the tissue around the injury. This process is followed by discoloration. New growth rings are laid down the following spring and new tissue begins to grow over the injured tissue. Over time, the new tissues close the wound.

Homeowners can help the tree compartmentalize the damage more rapidly than it does in nature, which speeds up the healing process. If the trunk bark has been damaged, cut away the damaged bark and remove other debris from the wound area. Try to smooth the surface of the exposed area with a chisel.

Some injuries to trees result in cavities or hollows within the main trunk or large branches. For years, gardeners have tried filling these cavities with bricks, concrete or other material in an effort to seal the cavity from rain, insects and disease – but have had little luck. Overall, simply keeping the cavity clean of debris and leaves is all that's recommended.

Oklahomans know all about damage caused by storms. If possible, remove all broken branches and reshape the tree as much as possible at the time of the damage. Broken trunks, split crotches or cracked limbs often can be mended by restoring the damaged part to its original position and holding it there permanently. Consult a professional arborist to install screw rods or cables if this type of work is necessary to save the tree.

For more information on proper pruning and managing storm-damaged trees see OSU fact sheets [Pruning Ornamental Trees, Shrubs, and Vines](#) and [Managing Storm-Damaged Trees](#).