



Prepare Your Garden for Summer Storms

The approach of a summer season gives us an occasion to review how to prepare for windstorms and longer-term strategies to make cleanup and recovery easier.

The best strategy to achieve a resilient landscape is to make sure your plants are healthy and correctly pruned on a regular basis. Regular maintenance is the key. Plants that are weak or damaged will be the first to fall in a storm. Avoid a severe “hurricane cut” to healthy foliage right before the storm; those cuts might deprive the plants, especially palms, of nutrients just when they need them most.

Native trees and shrubs can create a strong foundation for a hurricane-proof landscape. Native plants are adapted to withstand strong winds and many can tolerate short periods of saltwater flooding. When the sun returns, you will find many of these plants stripped of foliage, but the established ones will soon start sprouting new leaves.

Native palms can anchor a landscape plan and those palms will never let you down. Silver Buttonwoods can create a lovely backdrop to blooming native or exotic plants, and can be easily pruned into a hedge or kept to a manageable size. Bay Cedars can create an exceedingly hardy line of feathery leaves and bright yellow blossoms along a fence line or can serve as easy-care specimen plants.

Native Muhly Grass will spring back after the wind or flood to provide gorgeous pink seed heads to dance in the fall winds and bring movement and grace to your landscape throughout the winter. For dainty white flowers and glossy green leaves on a moderate-sized shrub, consider native Pearlberry. Native Firebush will provide the showiest of bright red blooms, but you will need a pretty big space to accommodate a mature plant.



Native [*Muhly Grass*](#) stands up to wind and floods.

Key West Garden Club

For a more varied look, many gardeners add a carefully-selected mix of sturdy exotic plants. Both full-sized and dwarf varieties of *Jatropha* are favorites of garden club members who want a guarantee of blooms right after a storm. The variegated leaves of Map Plant (pink) or Song of India (yellow) provide splashes of color within a few weeks. *Pseuderanthemums* often survive the storm with flying colors.

[Jatropha](#) blooms bright and early after the storm.



Panama Rose will look pretty bad right after a beating from the wind, but will starting blooming again within weeks. Foxtail Fern and most varieties of Liriope will quickly spring back to cover the ground with patches of green and interesting textures.



[Panama Rose](#) blooms again weeks after a storm.

There is a long list of plants that will break your heart and possibly your back after the storm. Bromeliads top my list of losers after a storm. If they aren't yanked out of the ground by the wind, they rot after salt water sits in them after the flood. Most fruit trees suffer or die if they take too much of a beating from wind or flooding. But I try not to concentrate on the losers because there are so many lovely winners to try.

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