Replant the Trees

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As the debate over the felling of trees on the island rages on, the stark reality of those six-inch stumps left in their place hammers the hearts of homeowners as you examine the street easements of your property. A numbing sensation of blatant fury overcomes you followed by a feeling of helplessness and sadness.

The sense of security that your home had, surrounded by these ageless specimens of oak, ash and pecan has been replaced with an exposed vulnerability. We know that we must put aside this sorrow and these thoughts of regret and move ahead putting behind us one more frustrating aggravation of Hurricane Ike.

It is possible and with determination and a forward thinking plan we will succeed. We have heard that there will be seedlings available to the public at some point in the fall.

While contemplating the many options available to replace our lost trees, consider the eventual full-grown size and shape of the tree, the light and moisture needs, drought or flood and salt-water tolerance and any possible pest problems of the species of choice.

The Green Ash (Fraxinus pennsylvanica) is a native tree that is known for its lengthy life expectancy. This is a deciduous broadleaf tree that grows up to sixty feet in height with a broad crown of thirty feet.

The green ash is a vigorous tree with glossy foliage that turns yellow in the fall. It transplants readily and is exceptionally adaptable as it can abide a wide range of soil conditions and once established, tolerates salty conditions and drought. Plant in full sun in sandy or clay soil. This is a splendid shade tree!

The Shumard Oak (Quercus shumardii) is a large stately tree with a rounded form and great fall color. Growing to sixty feet in height at a moderate pace if planted in shade or full sun. Considered one of the “single best shade trees” by nurserymen, the shumard oak is beautiful and will thrive in deep clay or in sandy loamy soils.

The Camphor Tree (Cinnamomum camphora) is a dense broadleaf tree that grows up to forty feet tall with a spread of twenty-five feet. The leaves have a glossy, waxy appearance and a smell of camphor when crushed.

In spring it may produce bright green foliage with masses of small white flowers followed by clusters of black berry-like fruit. The pale colored bark of this tree is very rough and makes a great toe-hold for future tree climbers!

Camphor trees grow in full sun to partial shade, tolerate clay, loam, sand, slightly alkaline to acidic soils, and drought. “It is magnificent where as a street tree it provides a complete canopy over the street.... It has a strong structure with heavy, upright, spreading limbs. The deeply furrowed, light gray bark turns a beautiful black when wet.”

The Southern Magnolia (Magnolia grandiflora) is truly a giant among southern plants. It is a traditional time-honored “aristocrat” of trees for the front yards of the south.

Soaring upright to heights of sixty to eighty feet, the magnolia boasts six to ten inch leathery dark green leaves that spotlight large creamy-white fragrant blooms. The Southern Magnolia is extremely drought resistant and prefers well-drained acidic soils.

The Chinese Fringe Tree (Chionanthus retusus) produces a profusion of blooms in spring that resemble white fringe, a spectacular show that lasts for several weeks. “The Chinese fringe tree offers a beautiful form; lustrous, semi-glossy leaves; white, fleecy flowers; and exfoliating bark. The bark is especially ornamental in the winter after the trees lose their leaves.” The leaves themselves turn a pleasant shade of yellow in the fall.

The Chinese fringe tree was introduced to the United States over a century ago and has continued to grow in popularity, as it is very easy to cultivate, preferring full sun but tolerating shade as well while being nearly pest and disease free. “For dramatic effect, few trees offer greater season-long charm to the landscape than the Chinese fringe tree.”

The Purple Vitex Tree (Vitex agnus-castus) does well in full sun and prefers hot dry conditions that prolong the bloom season from May to September. Fast growing with lilac colored spike-shaped flowers that will attract butterflies and hummingbirds, it is also disease and pest free.

The Purple Vitex makes an excellent choice as an accent tree or as a large shrub. Look for the Texas Superstar tag, a designation that the plant is part of a program began in 1989 at Texas A&M which applies the combined “horticultural smarts” of the A&M long history of expertise in agriculture to developing plants designated as Superstars to be even more desirable and successful for Texas gardens.

These trees are so hardy that the Texas Department
of Transportation plants them on highway medians!
Autumn is the optimum time to re-plant, as there will be less stress to the trees with a decrease in the temperatures and hopefully an increase in the rainfall. Next month we will highlight some additional varieties of trees and shrubs with a high rating for success in our area.

It would seem sensible to think that since palm trees survived the storm fairly well, let’s plant all palms... but we need a variety of trees... another issue to bear in mind is the sustainability of wildlife...do these selections support the life habitats of birds or squirrels, butterflies or bees?

We nearly have a clean slate with which to work some magic; our choices are numerous and varied, we have an opportunity to create an even more beautiful island paradise!

The Texas Agricultural Extension Service offers a free booklet entitled “Native and Adapted Trees for the Galveston-Houston Area” as well as a leaflet entitled “Trees and Shrubs for Galveston County” that feature large, small, flowering and fruit trees and shrubs that should be considered in your replanting plan. You may call and request a copy from the Extension Office in Dickinson at 281-534-3413.

Storm Survivability Rating
Recently, a group of Master Gardeners along with Dr. William Johnson, the Galveston County Extension Agent and Dr. Don Wilkerson from Texas A&M University met to begin a study of trees and plants commonly grown in our area to determine a storm survivability rating. Each plant or tree was given a rating.

H ~ These plants showed little if any storm damage regardless of external factors such as lack of irrigation, location, soil type etc.
M ~ These plants showed signs of damage but largely based on external factors such as lack of irrigation, location, soil type, etc.
L ~ These plants showed signs of damage regardless of external factors such as lack of irrigation, location, soil type, etc.

Eventually, the results of this study will be accessible on the A&M University website where you will type in your plant choice... its rating and information about its viability for our area will be available. Stay tuned!

Remember planting in a right of way or an easement requires a permit from the City of Galveston and there may be phone, gas and/or water lines in some easements.

from its legendary beginning as the first golf course and country club in Texas, the Galveston Country Club shares a rich history with its native island city.

Founded in 1898, this mainstay of the Island's elite has become the social focal point of Galveston's West Beach. The club has changed locations four times, settling in its present location adjacent to Lake Como in 1949.

Galveston Country Club boasts a magnificent 18-hole golf course, a swimming pool, tennis courts, elegant as well as casual banquet and dining facilities.

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Galveston Country Club

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