

# RPG Times

Fall 2004

A Publication of the Roots Plus Field-Growers Association of Florida



## Heinz 57 or Pedigree

By Todd Woodfield, Bent Oak Farm

The Quercus family is probably the last of the large groups of trees to undergo the cultivar selection craze. The ability to successfully propagate may have delayed this group until more knowledge was available on the cutting sequence and the hormone strength.

In the past, success rate of many propagators hovered in the 20% to 40% range for many years. In most cases, this made rooting oaks very cost prohibitive. The cost for tying up greenhouse space with dead oak cuttings had to be passed along to the customer, in the form of a 1-gallon or 3-gallon.

There was a lot of buzz and very little understanding on why the cost was so high to the customer. The propagation divisions may have failed to educate their fellow growers and to remind them that oaks are different than red maples and hollies, which are rooted at rates well into the lower 90% range.

Let's take a look from the beginning of propagation and then from the field grower's perspective.

The propagator identifies an oak (we'll use Live Oak as an example). Several questions must be answered. First, what is the age of the tree? If the tree is 10 years old or younger, there is no problem. If the tree is 11 to 30 years, how large is the juvenile cone? If the

## Salvage Your Assets

**Help storm damaged trees recover from the hurricanes**

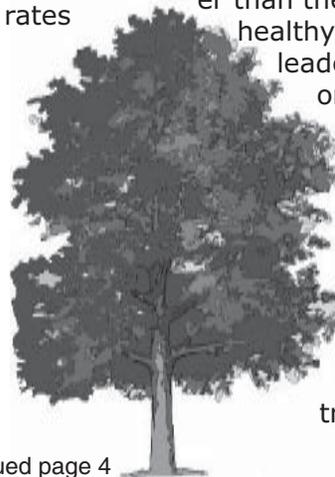
By Norm Easey, Florida Chapter ISA

The recent hammering of hurricanes across Florida has left behind an extraordinary amount of property damage. Thousands of trees and communities have been damaged by the heavy winds and rains of hurricanes Charley, Frances, Ivan and Jeanne. The International Society of Arboriculture offers some post storm advice to help you and your trees recover from this disaster.

### Post Storm First Aid:

**Do not try to do it all yourself-** If large limbs are broken or hanging, or if ladder or overhead chain saw work is needed, it is a job for a professional arborist.

**Assess the damages-** Evaluate your trees carefully by asking the following questions: Other than the storm damage, is the tree basically healthy and vigorous? Are major limbs or the leader (the main upward-trending branch on most trees) branch still remaining? Is at least 50 percent of the tree's crown (branches and leaves) still intact? Are there remaining branches that can form a new branch structure? If you answered "yes" to the majority of these questions, there is a good chance for complete recovery. For assistance, hire an ISA Certified Arborist to determine the tree's conditions.



Heinz 57, continued page 4

Salvage your assets, continued page 5



Mark your calendar for the next RPG Field Day!

**May 12, 2004**

co-sponsored by Roots Plus Growers the Florida Chapter ISA  
& University of Florida Extension

## 4th Annual Great Southern Tree Conference Scheduled for December

Join nursery and landscape industry members from across the southern United States for the fourth annual Great Southern Tree Conference (GSTC) in Gainesville, Florida, on December 2-3, 2004.

GSTC is a conference devoted entirely to tree selection, landscape, production, establishment and marketing issues in the southern United States. This premier industry event will establish a cutting edge educational conference centered around an outdoor demonstration area developed in conjunction with the conference.

The 15-acre demonstration site, supplied by the University of Florida, has more than 20 ongoing projects that have and will continue to help the industry implement new technologies into daily practice. Vital components of this conference will be hands-on training, applied field demonstrations and current project updates. Green industry members will see for themselves the results of various production practices and techniques, and learn how to put them to use in their businesses immediately. Indoor presentations will be combined with outdoor demonstrations for this two-day event.

All segments of the industry benefit from this conference, including growers, managers, owners, landscape architects, landscape contractors, arborists, municipalities, researchers and educators, all coming together for an annual conference to share experiences and project results in growing, planting and using quality trees. This is the only conference in the United States designed specifically for hands-on training of green industry members.

December's conference will feature, among others, Katy Moss Warner, American Horticultural Society, Dr. Jason Grabosky, Rutgers University and Kirk Brown, Garden Design Inc.

Great Southern, continued page 4

## RPG Notes for Growth

by Jack Siebenthaler



Don't look back! They're gaining on us.

That's right. The competition is forever coming up with new and/or different approaches to growing and harvesting trees. Not only are these different approaches being aggressively marketed, they are offering inviting changes to the customers.

While Roots Plus Growers remain leaders in the field of quality tree growing and successful marketing, there is a high degree of competition becoming more available this year. This can be looked at as something to be feared or as something to be challenging!

The correct way to view the situation is to be challenged. After all, this is what makes leaders deserving of the title.

A look through the latest issue of LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT AND SPECIFIER NEWS revealed one of our members as being alert enough to list in several areas of marketing. This is encouraging and should alert all RPG members to the value of expanding their marketing potential. A look at the other non-RPG firms taking advantage of such exposure is an indication of at least some of our competition.

One way to look at this business of growing and marketing a finely unique tree product line is to picture RPG growers as being in a major race for the title of best trees for the market. With this sort of perspective, it is not difficult to think of the RPG grower as being a highly valuable team member bent on gaining a highly valuable prize.

If this prize is worth the effort of belonging to such a fine organization then it is certainly worth expending a major effort in producing, marketing and promoting at the highest level possible!





# Roots Plus News

## Hurricane Impact

Florida Agriculture and Consumer Services Commissioner Charles H. Bronson says early estimates indicate agriculture losses resulting from both Hurricane Charley and Hurricane Frances will exceed two billion dollars, 30 percent of the state's agriculture industry, and these losses will increase based on Hurricane Ivan and Jeanne's impact on the state. The impact has been felt in every sector of agriculture from nurseries to citrus to timber.

Early estimates being reported to the Department indicate the nursery industry, which is the top agriculture industry in Florida, will suffer a loss of between \$530-\$600 million dollars from both storms. This includes the loss of product as well as structural damage. Florida's citrus industry faces losses of more than \$400 million dollars from Charley and Frances not including structural damages and the state's timber industry anticipates more than \$150 million dollars in losses.

"These losses are unprecedented in the state's history and will be devastating to Florida's economy given that agriculture is second only to tourism as a top industry in this state," Bronson said. "I am grateful that President Bush acknowledged the importance of agriculture to the state and has committed to provide money at the federal level to help this state rebuild. We are doing everything possible to respond to emergency needs of our farmers but the amount of devastation is such that it will take some time."

## Hurricane Resources

University of Florida Extension has many resources available for those recovering from storm and hurricane damage. The following websites include information on disaster preparedness and recovery as well as evaluating storm damaged trees. The disaster preparedness and recovery link is [http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ TOPIC\\_Disaster\\_Preparedness\\_and\\_Recovery](http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ TOPIC_Disaster_Preparedness_and_Recovery). For information on storm damaged trees please click the following link <http://hort.ifas.ufl.edu/woody/Maturetreecare/index.htm> and go the storm damage tab.

## Sleeve ≠ RPG

Regular buyers of field grown trees are most likely familiar with the black sleeve of weed-cloth like material over the root ball of each tree. This sleeve covers the wire basket after harvest and helps to prevent new roots from taking hold in the ground during the hardening off period. Please note that though many growers ship trees with these sleeves over the root ball, that does not guarantee that the trees have been hardened off. Be sure to look for the RPG tag on the trees you buy as your guarantee of quality hardened off trees. Trees with a black sleeve does not necessarily mean the trees are RPG.

## Preparing to Avoid Freeze Damage

In 1999 Stewart's Tree Service, Inc. had trees as large as 4" caliper with splits in the bark due to freeze damage. The reason these trees split is due to watering the trees too much during the winter months. Since then we have changed our method of watering our trees from November to mid-February. If you are located in Central Florida or North we recommend you shut your trees down for the winter by decreasing fertilizer and irrigation. This problem happens more frequently in production than in landscapes but can be a problem in both situations. For more information on protecting your trees please call Jim Stewart at 352-279-1871.



tree is more than 30 years old, does it have a juvenile cone? In general, the farther the cutting is taken from the root zone, the more difficult it is to root. Some other questions that need to be answered are: What is the nutrient level of the tree? Does it need fertilizer? Is the tree under water stress?

Now is the time to take the cutting – not too hard, not too soft, single wound, double wound, or no wound. Hormone strength is based on the rigidity of the wood. Soil type and mist cycles also come into play. This may sound easy, but one miscalculation could cost you the entire crop, and no two crops respond the same.

Cutting grown or acorn is the field grower's choice. It is based on expensive cultivars vs. standard production cost of acorn trees.

Acorns are a mixture of two parents. Therefore, each acorn will show its genetic attributes in a different manner. This means, the tree could possibly have a large leaf that's uncupped and a straight central leader with strong flair roots, or it could be the complete opposite. The strengths and weaknesses often do not display themselves until they have gone through the juvenile stage. Acorns are neither predictable nor dependable. Growth rate is not the same for each when they are planted. Pruning to a central leader can be complex. Because genetics make each tree grow and look different, many landscapes start showing flaws and inconsistencies three to four years after planting. This is especially true for trees planted in rows or groups.

Cultivars, however, should eliminate this and provide years of dependable beauty. Advantages to cultivars include; Live Oaks growing at the same rate, spring bud break occurs at the same time, and shape and form are near identical. Fall color on cultivar Nuttalls and Shumards would occur at the same time. Leaf drop and clean up would be more predictable for the maintenance crew.

This all leads the grower back to the original question – Can I afford not to lower my cull rate, and increase my productivity by pruning cloned trees? Will I lower my tagging cost and consolidation time? Because all trees look the same, will my fields show better and justify my higher price, which will generate a higher revenue per acre? Is the difference between a \$10.00 seedling crop and a \$20 cultivar crop really that different? Do the

This unique educational program was developed through the joint efforts of the Florida Nursery, Growers & Landscape Association (FNGLA) and the University of Florida IFAS. Conference partners play an important role in the conference. The 2004 Champion Level Conference Partners include: Be-Mac Farms, Bent Oak Farm, Cherry Lake Tree Farm, Inc., Florida Chapter ISA, Holloway Technology, Marshall Tree Farm, Shadowlawn Nursery, Skinner Nurseries, Stewart's Tree Service, Inc, and Tree Introductions, Inc. The GSTC is also funded by a \$25,000 grant through the Division of Forestry and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

Individuals interested in attending the 2004 GSTC should contact the FNGLA office at 800.375.3642 (toll-free) or visit the conference website at [www.greatsouthern-treeconference.org](http://www.greatsouthern-treeconference.org).

The Florida Nursery, Growers & Landscape Association represents Florida's nursery & landscape industry, with an estimated \$9.9 billion in industry-wide sales. Founded in 1952, FNGLA is the largest state nursery & landscape association representing nursery growers, retail garden centers, landscape professionals, allied suppliers and other horticulture-related businesses. For more information, visit the FNGLA website at [www.fn gla.org](http://www.fn gla.org), or send an email to [info@fn gla.org](mailto:info@fn gla.org) or call 800.375.3642.



**Stand Trees back up-** Many trees suffer friction failures that cause the tree's root system to lift out of the ground as the tree leans over. Uprooted trees are often unnecessarily removed under the mistaken idea that they can not be saved. These trees can often be saved but are very dangerous. The tension caused by the roots still in the ground can cause the tree to snap back. Consult the service of a certified arborist if you are unsure about performing this work.

**Beware of Price Gouging-** Sometimes less credible tree services will take advantage of storm victims. Good tree work by qualified professionals is not inexpensive; however, poor work no matter the price paid can cost you a great deal. A reasonable price for professional tree work in Florida ranges from \$75-\$125 per worker per hour. This price includes liability and workman's compensation insurance, as well as bucket trucks and equipment. It does not include heavier specialty equipment that may be needed such as cranes, loaders, etc., or hardware that may be installed in the tree.

**Financial Recovery-** Be aware that tree losses to your landscape, whether large or small, may be deductible from your taxes. Two steps must be taken to be able to claim this deduction: 1. Document the tree damage/loss with photos and an evaluation from a certified arborist who has experience appraising trees. Such a certified arborist will be able to provide you with an estimated dollar value for your loss. 2. Consult the services of a tax professional. "Even if you don't have insurance you may be entitled to some financial relief by taking advantage of a provision of the tax code which allows you to deduct casualty losses from your income tax," says David Bradach, CPA, Jackson-Hewitt Tax Service, Naples, FL.

The time to prepare your trees for tropical storms is long before hurricane season. Steps such as pruning trees right before a storm can lead to hasty or improper tree care. ISA also provides some tips to help prepare you and trees for possible future storm damage.

**Pre Storm Preparation:**

**Look for potential Hazards-** Investigate the condition of your trees. You or a certified arborist should look for damage such as cracks in the trunk or major limbs; hollow, aged, and decayed trees; hanging branches; improperly formed branches; one-sided or significantly leaning trees;

and branches that may potentially rub the house.

**Know your tree species-** Some species are more prone to storm damage. Some of the more common trees include: older laurel oak, queen palm, jacaranda, Poinciana, Australian pine, slash pine, silk oak, peltophorum, melaleuca, orchid, Chinaberry, gumbo limbo, bischofia, tamarind, acacia, tabebuia, cassia, rosewood, Chinese tallow, ficus, mimosa, avocado, and Chinese elm trees.

**Do not top your trees-** Untrained individuals may urge you to cut back all of the branches, on the mistaken assumption that it will help avoid breakage in future storms. However, professional arborists say that "topping," the cutting of main branches back to stubs, is extremely harmful and unhealthy for your trees. Stubs will often grow back many weakly attached branches that are higher and are more likely to break when a storm strikes. Also, topping will reduce the amount of foliage, on which the tree depends for the food and nourishment needed for re-growth. A topped tree that has already sustained major storm damage is more likely to die than repair itself.

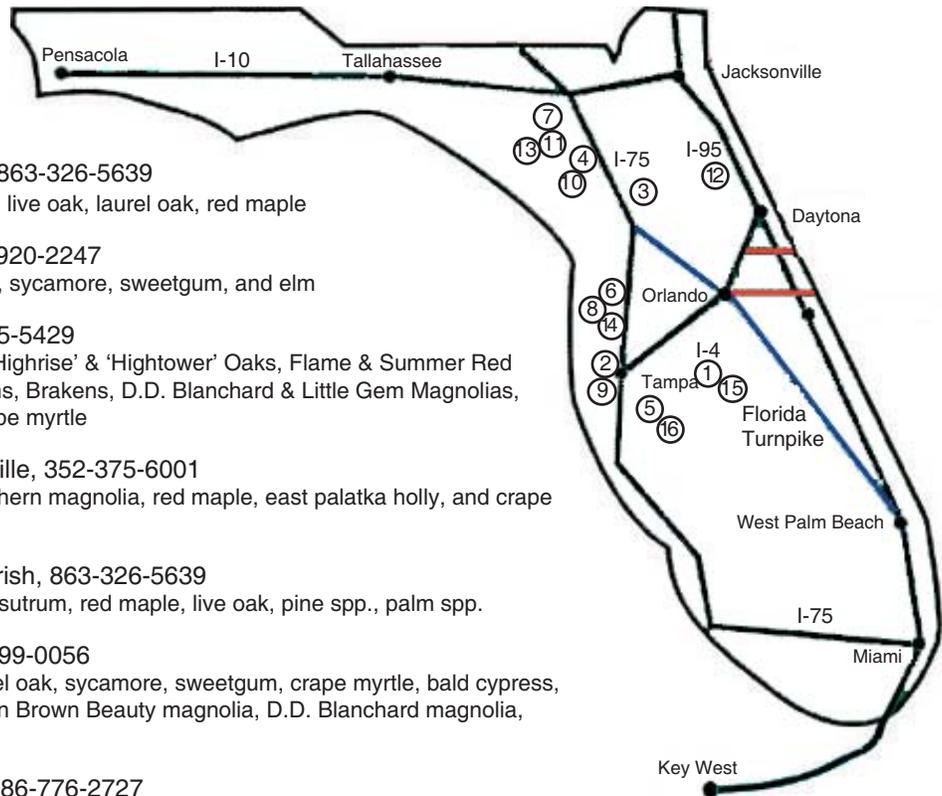
**Protect your assets-** Trees may increase property value by up to 20%. Find out if your homeowner's insurance will cover any damage your landscape may sustain due to unnatural causes, and include the total value of your trees when listing your assets for coverage. A certified arborist can provide an estimated value by inspecting your trees.

Trees are dynamic living things that require proper care. Hiring a certified arborist who can assist you with pre-storm inspections and post-storm repairs can help avoid the unnecessary loss of your trees.

The International Society of Arboriculture is a non-profit organization supporting tree care research around the world. Headquartered in Champaign, Ill, ISA is dedicated to the care and preservation of shade and ornamental trees. For consumer information and to find a certified arborist, visit [www.treesaregood.com](http://www.treesaregood.com). The Florida Chapter (FL-ISA), located in Sarasota, FL, supports research, education, and proper tree care throughout Florida. For professional tree care information (storm damaged trees) visit [www.floridaisa.org](http://www.floridaisa.org), or contact Norm Easey, Florida Chapter, at [floridaisa@aol.com](mailto:floridaisa@aol.com).



# Roots Plus Growers Association Members locator map and available species



- ① Alturas Native Nursery - Alturas, 863-326-5639  
RPG Trees Available: bald cypress, live oak, laurel oak, red maple
- ② BE-MAC Farms - Odessa, 813-920-2247  
RPG Trees available: live oak, pine, sycamore, sweetgum, and elm
- ③ Bent Oak Farm - Ocala, 352-245-5429  
RPG Trees available: 'Cathedral', 'Highrise' & 'Hightower' Oaks, Flame & Summer Red Maples, Allee, Bosque & Drake Elms, Brakens, D.D. Blanchard & Little Gem Magnolias, Arapaho, Natchez & Muskogee crape myrtle
- ④ Champion Tree Farm - Gainesville, 352-375-6001  
RPG Trees available: live oak, southern magnolia, red maple, east palatka holly, and crape myrtle
- ⑤ Ellenton Nursery Growers - Parrish, 863-326-5639  
RPG Trees available: sycamore, ligustrum, red maple, live oak, pine spp., palm spp.
- ⑥ FMT Farms - Brooksville, 352-799-0056  
RPG Trees available: live oak, laurel oak, sycamore, sweetgum, crape myrtle, bald cypress, leylandii cypress, ligustrum, Bracken Brown Beauty magnolia, D.D. Blanchard magnolia, maple
- ⑦ Fort Drum Growers - McAlpin, 386-776-2727  
RPG Trees available: live oak, laurel oak, drake elm, sycamore, sweetgum, river birch, east palatka holly, bradford pear, slash pine
- ⑧ OAKCO Tree Farm - Brooksville, 352-796-3426  
RPG Trees available: live oak, ligustrum
- ⑨ Keystone Farms - Odessa, 813-920-0894  
RPG Trees available: live oak, ligustrum, variegated ligustrum
- ⑩ Marshall Tree Farm - Morriston, 800-786-1422  
RPG Trees available: live oak cultivars, southern magnolia cultivars, crape myrtle, slash pine, bald cypress, holly cultivars, winged elm, 'Allee' lacebark elm, sweetgum
- ⑪ Nature Coast Tree Corp, Bell, 386-935-9349  
RPG Trees available: live oak, ligustrum, holly, 'Highrise' live oak, 'Cathedral' live oak, 'Alta' and 'D.D. Blanchard' magnolia cultivars
- ⑫ Skinner Nurseries - Bunnell, 800-741-2020  
RPG Trees available: live oak, ligustrum, holly, crape myrtle
- ⑬ Southern Pride Tree Farm - Bell, 386-935-3636  
RPG Trees available: live oak, ligustrum, holly
- ⑭ Stewart's Tree Service - Brooksville, 352-796-3426  
RPG Trees available: red cedar, live oak
- ⑮ Tiger Lake Nursery - Lake Wales, 863-692-1009  
RPG Trees available: live oak, laurel oak
- ⑯ Walsh Brokerage - Parrish, 863-326-5639  
RPG Trees available: palm spp., live oak, laurel oak, sycamore,

## Associate Members

- Braun Horticulture
- Caretree Systems
- Cherokee Manufacturing
- Crown Community Development
- General Cordage
- Graco Fertilizer Company
- Grass Roots Nurseries
- Jack Siebenthaler
- Seaworld
- Sunrise Landscape
- Treemart

# RPG TIMESline

December 2-3rd, 2004 - 4th Annual Great Southern Tree Conference, Gainesville, FL  
Visit [www.greatsoutherntreeconference.org](http://www.greatsoutherntreeconference.org) or call 800-375-FNGA for more information

January 20-22nd, 2005 - Gulf States Horticultural EXPO, Mobile, AL  
Visit [www.alna.org](http://www.alna.org) or call 334-821-5148 for more information

January 20-22nd, 2005 - Tropical Plant Industry Exposition (TPIE), Ft. Lauderdale, FL  
Visit [www.tpie.org](http://www.tpie.org) or call 800-375-FNGA for more information

January 26 & 28th, 2005 - Tree Ordinance Seminar, Florida Chapter ISA  
Visit [www.floridaisa.org](http://www.floridaisa.org) or call 941-342-0153 for more information

February 25-26th, 2005 - Tampa Spring EXPO, Tampa, FL  
Visit [www.tbwg.org](http://www.tbwg.org) or call 813-655-1914 for more information

March 18-19th, 2005 - Northeast Florida Horticultural Trade Show, Jacksonville, FL  
Call the Northeast Chapter FNGLA at 904-292-1117 for more information

May 12th, 2005 - Roots Plus Field Day, Stewart's Tree Service, Brooksville, FL  
Call 352-528-3880 for more information

June 11-14th, 2005 - Trees Florida 2005, Captiva, FL  
Visit [www.floridaisa.org](http://www.floridaisa.org) or call 941-342-0153 for more information

## RPG Information

If you would like more information about the Roots Plus Field-Growers Association of Florida please complete the following and return it to:

Roots Plus Growers  
17350 SE 65th Street  
Morrison, FL 32668

Please add me to your mailing list

Please send me information on the following:

RPG Membership

Other \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Firm \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City / State / Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_

