Hurricane Survivors

Coastal North Carolina may see a hurricane or two in any given summer. Each storm has different characteristics and may affect our trees, shrubs and gardens in different ways. All of the storms bring high, salt-laden winds, but may be accompanied by heavy rains, minimizing the salt burn damage. Other storms cause heavy freshwater and/or saltwater flooding. Each Carteret gardener will be affected differently depending on direction of winds, proximity to saltwater and low ground flooding.

Certain plants seem to resist damage no matter what a hurricane throws at them, while others may be severely damaged if exposed to only one hurricane induced stress.

With the help of many coastal gardeners, we have compiled the following lists of plants, divided by their typical response to hurricane stress:

A. THE SPECIAL 15: These plants were named again and again on every gardener’s list as surviving unscathed:

- Aucuba (Gold Dust Plant)
- Bulbs and tubers (died back, but returned unscathed in the spring) ex.: lilies and cannas.
- Camellias
- Cleveras
- Eleagnus
- Fatshedera
- Hollies (esp. Burford and Yaupon)
- Indian Hawthorne (Raphiolepis)
- Ligustrum
- Palms, especially Sabal minor
- Perennials (died back, but returned unscathed) ex. Baptisia & Iceplant
- Pittosporum
- Quercus Virginiana and Laurifolia (Live Oaks)
- Yuccas

B. THE RUNNERS UP: This group of plants survived well, but a few homeowners reported initial damage:

- American Holly (Illex opa – initially lost all leaves)
- Azaleas
- Boxwood
- Callistemon
- Crepe Myrtles (lost all leaves)
- Daphne
- Flowering Quince
- Fringe Tree (Chionanthus)
- Gardenia
- Hydrangeas
- Juniper
- Lorapetalum
- Nandina
- Pyracantha
- Red Cedar (Juniperus)
- Rose of Sharon
- Spirea
C. In this category, most plants were damaged with burned leaves or badly broken branches, but recovered by the following spring:

- Roses
- Confederate Jasmine (Trachelospermum)
- Redbud
- Viburnum

D. Plants which were very sensitive to and severely harmed by the stresses of the storm (wind, salt), and thus, cannot be recommended for vulnerable areas:

- Annuals (most all)
- Cypress (Taxodium)
- Dogwood
- Japanese Maple
- Maple Trees, in general
- Pecan Trees
- Pines (all species)
- River Birch