

Scenic Watch



Covering
News from
May 2022

"Here's your hurricane to-do list for large trees on the Space Coast"



Photo: Sally Scalera, Florida Today

A tree that is too close to sidewalks, driveways or streets is prone to blowing over in a storm.



Photo: Sally Scalera, Florida Today

Call in a certified arborist if you find a root girdling a large tree in your yard.

"...Though I do not expect a bad hurricane season (blame it on optimism), it is always best to be prepared. If you own large trees that are 50 feet or taller, complete this checklist as soon as you can.

Location. Check to see if any large trees are planted less than 12 feet from a sidewalk, driveway or street. Any closer is not recommended, because trees can cause damage by lifting and cracking cement. If you do have a large tree planted too close, consider consulting a certified arborist to determine if the tree needs the canopy thinned because of a lack of proper rooting area.

Look for girdling roots. Walk around your trees to see if any girdling roots are visible. A girdling root will be growing on the surface of the soil, close to and around the trunk. Girdling roots can eventually strangle a portion of the trunk, which, if it wraps half-way around the trunk or more, could kill the tree. If a girdling root is present, consult a certified arborist...

Know your roots. Has there been any construction activity within approximately 20 feet of the tree trunk within the past 10 years? If large roots have been cut close to the trunk to make way for things such as a sidewalk or utilities, the tree may be prone to falling in the direction where the roots were cut.

Don't scalp your palms. Never let anyone do a "hurricane cut" on your palms to protect them from being blown over during a hurricane. Palms, in general, fair well through hurricanes, but the practice of removing all but a few of the fronds can make the palm more vulnerable to damage during straight line winds or a hurricane.

A large canopy of fronds protects the terminal bud, but when most of the fronds are removed, the bud is more vulnerable to being snapped by the wind. Once the bud is snapped, the entire palm will die. So, do not let anyone remove green fronds, or fronds with both green and yellow tissue in the same frond. Only totally brown fronds should be removed."

-- Sally Scalera, Florida Today

[Read entire article](#)

"U study finds signs displaying highway death tolls lead to more crashes"

Displaying death counts causes 4.5% more crashes within 10 km



Why? It distracts drivers



How we know it distracts drivers:

Effect is larger when the number displayed is larger...



and when road segments are more complex.



Effect is immediate and decreases over distance...



and increases multi-vehicle, but not single-vehicle, crashes.

Key lessons for behavioral campaigns



Displaying death counts causes crashes.



Grabbing too much attention is dangerous.



People don't habituate to nudges.



Impact does not persist after treatment stops.



Evaluate new policies. Good intentions don't always lead to good outcomes.

[Downloadable graphic from study](#)

[Read the entire original STUDY here](#)

"Many departments of transportation across the United States use roadside electronic message boards to inform drivers how many people have died in traffic crashes for the year.

The idea behind the low-cost attention-grabbing strategy is to get motorists to slow down and drive safely.



Photo: Jonathan Hall, University of Toronto

But results from a study by researchers at the University of Minnesota and the University of Toronto published last month in the journal *Science* found the hard-hitting messages are having an unintended effect: They lead to more crashes.

'Good intentions do not always lead to good outcomes,' said Joshua Madsen, an assistant professor at the U's Carlson School of Management. 'There is something to suggest it's backfiring.'

Madsen and Jonathan Hall of the University of Toronto looked at Texas where highway death tolls are advertised one week a month. The researchers collected crash data for 2 1/2 years before the sign campaign started in August 2012 and compared the data with the five years that followed.

They found crashes increased 4.5% in the 10 miles immediately after drivers passed a sign during weeks when the grim numbers were posted versus the other weeks of the month when the death count was not. Crashes increased each month as the death toll rose, with the most wrecks occurring in January when the grand total from the previous year was displayed, the study said.

The safety messages contributed to an additional 2,600 crashes — most involving multiple vehicles — and 16 deaths per year in Texas, costing \$377 million annually, the study said.

'Our hypothesis is that people get lost in thought and focus on something other than what they need to focus on,' Madsen said. The sobering numbers can steal a driver's attention and adversely impact their ability to respond to changing traffic conditions, Madsen said. 'It has the ability to distract,' he said.

The Minnesota Department of Transportation has displayed fatality numbers only three times since 2017, said Kristine Hernandez, coordinator of the Minnesota's Toward Zero Deaths program, which seeks initiatives to eliminate traffic fatalities.

'We have chosen not to post the fatality number, mostly out of respect for the victims' family,' she said. 'Most people have no idea what the numbers have been, what's 'reasonable,' or what constitutes a need for them to change their behavior...''

-- Tim Harlow, Star Tribune

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Tree Canopy: Key West editorial on mitigating the damage caused by preemption of local control



Photo: Linda Grist Cunningham, in Key West Island News

"Historically, the Key West tree canopy boasted little in the way of shade trees. We are an inhospitable, oolite limestone island in the middle of salt water. What green things we had were more scraggly than soaring, the results of birds and other creatures using the island as a bathroom while stopping over on ways elsewhere.

Then came the 1920s and 1930s, when garden clubs and botanical societies held tree giveaways and encouraged folks to bring back seedlings from their travels.

That's how we ended up with so many mahoganies, royal poincianas and other canopy trees. They didn't spring up magically; we planted them. Sadly, most often, not in the right place. Then we built houses and pools and streets right on

top of their roots. We assumed they'd live forever.

Today, the Key West tree canopy faces two life-threatening challenges: (1) The trees planted 75-100 years ago are struggling; and (2) Florida's determination to strip municipalities of their home rule powers...

On June 26, 2019, Gov. Ron DeSantis gutted Florida tree commission regulations when he signed HB 1159...

... during its 2022 regular session, the Legislature amended the 2019 law to replace "danger" with "unacceptable risk." It said a tree poses an unacceptable risk "if removal is the only means of practically mitigating its risk below moderate as determined by the tree risk assessment procedures outlined in (ISA) Best Management Practices — Tree Risk Assessment, Second Edition (2017)." That complicated wording means some very specific things.

On July 1, when the amended law is in place, municipalities can use it to claw back some local control over tree removal. The amendment can become the first of three ways we can strengthen the Key West tree canopy:

1. File ethics violations with the ISA. Florida's law now requires an ISA tree risk assessment, which now includes a detailed, on-site review by ISA-certified tree experts. Signing a deliberately inaccurate assessment is an ISA ethics violation. ISA will investigate and can pull the certification...
2. Approve removal permit requests and require replacement — on property whenever possible. The amended law, like its predecessor, forbids municipalities from requiring replacements for trees taken down under the law. But, if a homeowner can't get a certified tree expert to certify that a protected tree is an "unacceptable risk," then said homeowner needs a permit from the tree commission. If the tree commission says "no," and if there's an unethical tree expert or some fly-by-night dude with a chainsaw, that tree is coming down. No replacement. If the tree commission grants the permit, it can (and does) require replacement...
3. Declare a ceasefire on blaming the city. The state's preemption appetite is the enemy. Let's direct our frustrations where they belong. Join other groups in other Florida municipalities to advocate for our canopy. Plant the right tree in the right place — and take care of it..."

-- Linda Grist Cunningham, Special To The Citizen

[Read entire article](#)

Key West: City recognized by Tree City USA ten times!



Photo: Chamber of Commerce showing Key West's official tree: the royal poinciana.

"...Your community should be proud to live in a place that makes the planting and care of trees a priority, and you should be proud of a job well done!" wrote the Tree City team in a letter announcing the recognition.

Karen DeMaria, the City's Urban Forester, says she's grateful for the recognition, one that the City has received ten times.

'Our island's canopy is vital to the quality of life of our residents and visitors,' said DeMaria.

Each year on Arbor Day, the City urges property owners to plant a tree.

'Trees on publicly and privately owned property within the city are economic and aesthetic asset to the citizens,' says DeMaria, 'because of their important and meaningful contribution to a healthy and beautiful community.'

Key West achieved Tree City USA recognition by meeting the program's four requirements: a tree board or department, a tree-care ordinance, an annual community forestry budget of at least \$2 per capita and an Arbor Day observance and proclamation.

The Tree City USA program is sponsored by the Arbor Day Foundation in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service and the National Association of State Foresters..."

-- Key West Chamber of Commerce

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"Coontie and nectar plants attract rare atala butterflies to your yard"



Photo: Sally Scalera, Florida Today

"Florida Today ran an article in 2017 about the Atala butterfly that was previously

thought to be extinct but had been discovered again.

Since that time, the butterflies have made a resurgence and have expanded their range.

The Atala's primary host plant is our native coontie, *Zamia integrifolia*, and because they are a popular landscape ornamental, the butterfly has made its way up to many parts of Brevard County.

The coontie is native to most of the Florida peninsula, where its natural habitat has well-drained soil dominated by pine trees. It is hardy from zones 8B through 11, and can survive winter temperatures as low as 15 degrees.

Originally, they were found throughout hammocks and pinelands, but due to the excessive collection of its starchy root and use in the landscape, it is rarely found in the wild now. Collection of wild coontie plants is prohibited, because they are on Florida's Commercially Exploited Plant List...

If you would like to support atala butterflies, plant coontie and nectar plants in your yard, then keep your eyes peeled for the small little butterflies, with the blue stripe and red spot. "

-- Sally Scalera, Florida Today

[Read entire article](#)

"New Smyrna Beach officials look to regulate murals, wall art"

"Mayor Russ Owens pulls item from agenda"



Photo: Click Orlando

"Walking down New Smyrna Beach's main strips, you'll see large, bright-colored murals on almost every block, but city leaders are looking to put some regulations on murals and wall art around the city.

The city commission was slated to discuss a proposed ordinance at its meeting Tuesday evening, but Mayor Russ Owens pulled the item from the agenda. It's not known when the topic will be next be discussed.

There currently are no regulations in place in the city, but local artists and business owners are concerned about the drafted ordinance.

'It's such a talking point. People love to see them, they love to take pictures in front of them,' said Missy McCormick, owner of Swanky Salon...

According to the drafted ordinance going to the commission for a first reading Tuesday, it would have to go. The proposal would limit the size, where they can be on the building, and they would not be allowed to include words, arrows, or lights...

Owens said the city has studied other Central Florida cities, like DeLand, adding that the point is to create some limitations to make sure the work does not create controversy.

'This is a difficult conversation we have to have as a community, and I would rather have it proactively versus reactively when we have something that is

dividing the community,' he said..."

-- Molly Reed, Click Orlando

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Citizens for a Scenic Florida

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