

# The Augusta Chronicle

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## COLUMNS

# Campbell Vaughn: Things to keep in mind as Augusta recovers from Hurricane Helene

**Campbell Vaughn** Columnist

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With the storm gone and the cleanup in full mode, there have been a few things that keep popping up with us at the Extension office as well as my regular everyday conversations. I figured we might discuss some of these.

Mosquitos are terrible. And when I say terrible, I mean wearing a beekeeper's suit kind of bad. The one we are seeing right now is the invasive Asian tiger mosquito. It is unique in that it feeds in the morning through the afternoon, which is unlike the mosquitos I grew up with that only came out in the evenings.

The entire life cycle of these biting jerks can be as short as seven days, so it is just about right for them to be trying to devour us a week after Helene.

The reason they are so prolific is the breeding area for them is so vast. They lay eggs in stagnant water and with as much water around after the storms they are in optimum condition to flourish. With gutters clogged, tree stump holes full of water, old buckets, cups, pools and any other H<sub>2</sub>O holding containers scattered for miles, it is a mosquito heaven.

The good news is it is drying out and the numbers will start dying out soon. The colder weather will help too. Wear mosquito repellents and long sleeves. Keep your doors closed, because they are coming inside in masses. Empty any standing water you see helps, too. If you do fog your yard, try and do it early in the morning or late in the evening to protect our pollinators.

Tree damage is so extensive that I hardly know where to start. Here are a few tips on if you need to remove a tree or not. If the tree is standing upright and isn't cracked, it probably isn't

an emergency to remove. If more than 50% of the tree is damaged, plan on getting the tree taken out because it isn't likely to recover.

There are some rules of thumb that we use for assessing pecan orchard damage that can correlate into landscape trees. If the tree is leaning 25% then it most likely can be uprighted. If it is leaning 40%, get it down. In homeowner and commercial landscapes, that 25% might work to save the tree in the long run, but you are going to need something powerful to move a tree back upright and you will need to stake it for a long time to reestablish the root system. And then it still isn't a guarantee that it will be completely healthy again.

When I mention the rule being for pecan producers, they have a lot invested in a tree since it takes eight years for a tree to produce. We are mostly using trees for shade, aesthetics, soil stabilization and hiding the neighbors 1979 Ford Pickup that is on blocks. Don't be afraid to remove a tree that can be replaced.

**Campbell Vaughn:** 'Like a bomb went off' is how Campbell describes Helene's devastation

I know there are so many trees that are gone that we are going to miss. The Georgia State Champion deodar cedar at the entrance to Augusta University fell. I loved showing that tree off to some of my plant-loving friends. The sheer size in diameter of the logs piled on the road up Walton Way and Berkman Road alone make you almost want to cry. God has an amazing way of healing the land, unfortunately it isn't in a timeframe for impatient humans like we tend to be.

My wife and I did get to see something that recently made us smile. There is a small leak of a main in front of our house which is flowing but is holding some water about a foot wide in a dip in the road. We saw a mockingbird taking a bath in there and loving it. When the mockingbird left, we watched seven male bluebirds come use that same puddle for a quick bath. They felt like I did when I finally got to take a hot shower after a week of no power and water.

Please be safe. There is a lot of dangerous stuff going on out there.

