

How to Prepare Storm-Damaged Trees for Milling

If you're dealing with storm-damaged trees and want to repurpose them into valuable lumber, here are some simple steps to prepare them for milling:

1. Assess the Trees for Milling Suitability

- **Look for Straight Trunks:** Trees with straight trunks are ideal for milling.
- **Avoid Severely Damaged or Rotted Trees:** Split, twisted, or rotting trees may not yield usable lumber.
- **Inspect for Signs of Decay:** Soft spots or fungus can indicate that the tree is no longer strong enough for milling.

2. Remove Branches and Limbs

- **Cut Off Large Branches:** Use a chainsaw to remove major limbs, leaving the trunk intact for milling.
- **Keep the Trunk Whole:** Longer trunks yield more usable lumber—avoid cutting the tree into short sections.

3. Clear the Work Area

- **Remove Surrounding Debris:** Clear branches, leaves, and other materials to provide easy access and ensure safety.
- **Create a Flat, Open Space:** Ensure there's enough room for the sawmill and safe operation of equipment.

4. Cut the Log to Length

- **Measure and Cut Logs to Desired Length:** 8 to 12 feet is a good length for milling. Avoid cutting logs shorter than 8 feet.
- **Avoid Short Logs:** Short logs are harder to mill and may not yield as much lumber.

5. Position Logs for Easy Access

- **Lift Logs Off the Ground:** Use branches or blocks to raise the logs, keeping them clean and reducing wear on saw blades.
- **Align Logs with Sawmill Setup:** Position the logs parallel to the sawmill's location to simplify loading.

6. Clean the Logs

- **Remove Dirt, Stones, and Mud:** Clean the logs with water or a brush to avoid dulling saw blades.
- **Check for Embedded Metal:** Use a metal detector or visually inspect for nails, screws, or other objects that could damage milling equipment.

7. Mark and Label Logs

- **Identify Logs for Milling:** Clearly mark logs that are ready to be milled using paint or chalk.
- **Organize Logs for Efficient Milling:** Label the logs to prevent confusion when it's time to start cutting.

8. Ensure Access for Sawmill Setup

- **Provide Clear Access to the Site:** Make sure the area is accessible for the sawmill and there is space for the operator to work.
- **Communicate Desired Cuts:** Discuss your lumber preferences with the sawmill operator, including board sizes or special cuts.

Assess the Trees for Milling Suitability

- **Check for Straightness:** Identify trees with relatively straight trunks. These will produce the best lumber.

Remove Branches and Limbs

- **Cut Off Major Branches**
- **Leave the Trunk Intact**

Clear the Work Area

- **Clear out debris**
- **Create a Space for Equipment:** Ensure there is a flat, stable area near the tree where you can set up your portable sawmill

Cut the Log to Length

- **Cut the log between 8 and 12 ft lengths**

- **Avoid logs larger than 28 inches in diameter may be too large for bandsaw milling**

Position the Logs for Easy Access

- **Stack Logs Off the Ground if possible**
- **Place the Logs Parallel to Where the Mill Will Be:** this allows for easy access and quicker saw time.

Mark and Label Logs

- **Identify Logs for Milling:** If multiple trees are being felled and prepped, mark logs that are ready for milling. Use spray paint or chalk to label the ends of logs to avoid confusion during the milling process.