Tree Notes

University of California
Agriculture and Natural Resources

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Assessing Tree Damage

Before clearing your landscape of fire-damaged trees, check to see if they will recover. Native California trees have several adaptations that helps them survive, or recover quickly from fire damage. If a tree does not pose an immediate hazard to health or property, provide it with an opportunity to recover.

Cut Hardwoods when…

1. The **cambium is completely dead** around the base of the tree. To check, cut small openings in the bark to expose the cambium layer underneath.

Surviving trees have Pink, Moist, and light colored wood under the bark

Dead trees will have Brown, Dry, dark colored wood under the bark

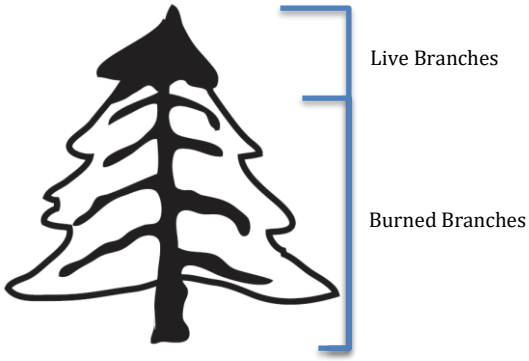
2. Unlike conifers, **Oaks can survive** even when all the foliage has burned off. The tree may even produce new foliage this year.

3. If the trunk has been killed, many oaks will **resprout from the roots** in the spring. Root sprouts grow much faster than new shoots from acorn plantings.

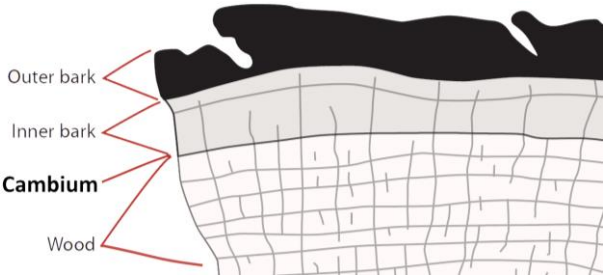
Cut Conifers when….

1. The tree is small (< 6 inches in diameter) and the bark is charred or exposed **continuously around the base**.

2. Less than **25% of the crown remains green** on the tree. *Conifers* only produce one set of foliage each year whereas oaks can potentially re-leaf after a fire.



3. If uncertain, check if the cambium is moist. A slow burning fire may leave the foliage green, but kill the live cambium tissue of the tree.



For more information about tree damage and recovery, contact your Shasta County CE Forest Advisor (530.224.4900) or Master Gardeners (530.242.2219)