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Late Edition

Today, mostly cloudy, cooler, patchy rain; high 74. Tonight, mostly cloudy, rain possible, low 66. Tomorrow, cloudy, chance of showers, high 79. Weather map, Page A24.

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THURSDAY, JULY 25, 2013 D1

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Home

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IN THE GARDEN

The Storm Erases, the Drawing Board Replaces

Two designers discuss strategies, including letting the landscape recover on its own.

By SARA BARRETT

It's hard to be optimistic when you're restoring a landscape after a major storm. Trucks tear up your lawn, workers drag fallen logs across your shrubs, the ground cover you carefully nurtured is buried in wood chips, and contractors empty your bank account. It's enough to keep a gardener indoors with the shades drawn. What to do?

I recently asked two landscape designers with 60-plus years of experience between them — Larry Weaner, in Glenside, Pa., and Janice Parker, who has offices in Connecticut, Manhattan and the Hamptons — how to repair my own landscape, which was damaged by the last two hurricanes, Irene in August 2011 and Sandy in October 2012.

The property, in northern Westchester, lost roughly 25 old-growth trees, many of them Norway spruce, some taller than 70 feet and more than 60 years old. Three dogwoods, two large cedars, a row of mature rhododendrons and an established hillside of ferns were also lost.

Both designers suggested starting with an inventory. "It will help you decide what approach to take," Mr. Weaner said. "Ask yourself, 'Am I looking at this as a natural area, with native plants, or do I want a mixture that is designed and might have to be managed?'"

Any disturbance, whether it's from a



PHOTOGRAPHS LEFT AND ABOVE BY SARA BARRETT/THE NEW YORK TIMES



storm or a bulldozer, resets the ecological pattern, he explained. "A cleared landscape starts with grassland or a meadow and moves to a shrub thicket then moves from pioneer trees into mature forest," he said. "You can determine the stage you want it to stop. If you want it to return to woods, you're treating it differently from

The author's property before Hurricane Sandy, top left, and afterward, top right. Restoration suggestions from Janice Parker, above left and center, and Larry Weaner, above right.

the way you treat a meadow."

His preference, he said, is to let a landscape recover on its own for a while and then design around what appears. It's particularly interesting to see what happens in places where light was once blocked by the older trees, he noted. "Seeds are going to germinate from the increased sunlight,"

he said. "Some of what appears will be undesirable, and can be edited." But be aware that whatever you do now will affect the garden for years to come: "The plants that get the head start are the ones that will dominate," he said.

Ms. Parker, on the other hand, began her inventory with the house. "Where do you spend most of your time?" she asked. "What are your favorite views? Are you the sink-window person or a book-window person, or do you lie in bed in the morning looking out the window?"

From there, she suggested stepping back and considering the property as a whole. "Determine what you love, piece by piece," she said. "Then prioritize the areas you want to work on." The key, she said, is developing a master plan that reflects not just your goals for the property, but your budget.

For the overwhelmed homeowner, she suggested making the simplest adjustments. "Fix it all for as little as possible, and as quickly as possible," she said. "Take anything out that isn't really good and highlight the beautiful things that are left in the landscape."

In my case, Ms. Parker suggested plantings that would emphasize the topography of the landscape in a three-phase process that began with the trees: That way, she said, you "get the erosion you might have from that tree work stabilized."

Establishing new trees takes a long time, but both designers advocated optimism. "The land can handle it," Ms. Parker said. "It grew those trees, it can bring them back."