

Hit by Cyclone Dovi



One of the wide grass paths in the Avenue Gardens

We weren't worried when the warnings came through that Cyclone Dovi might hit land in New Zealand. We are in the middle of vast ocean and mostly these storm events end up passing by. Besides, we are well sheltered here and it can be howling a gale elsewhere and we are relatively calm.

We were wrong last Sunday.



This was the base of the giant gum tree at our roadside before

Cyclone Dovi hit us with the worst winds we have ever experienced. The peak lasted for hours and was frankly terrifying and sounded as though we were surrounded by roaring trucks. Believe me, we were grateful that two years ago we dropped the one tree that would threaten our house if it fell. Our house came through Dovi unscathed.



and after with half of it split off and the other half lifting the ground around and needing to be felled

The first big tree I was aware of falling was the massive gum tree (eucalyptus) at our gate. It was around 170 years old, planted by Thomas Jury in the 1870s. We were lucky it fell inwards and not across the road. There is still a dead half of it left, leaning against the next tree and it will have to be felled with some urgency. The specialist arborist is currently thinking his way into how best to do that safely.



The sheer size of many of these trunks is daunting

We didn't dare walk around the property but I was standing on the doorstep when one of our largest pines broke off in two pieces causing massive damage as it came down in the Avenue Gardens. Because it came down in two pieces, it effectively did the same amount of damage as two trees falling. The jacaranda which had a splendid flowering this summer is now a broken stump and pretty much all the mid layer of trees and shrubs in the area have been taken out.

That was the pine that did the most damage. There are another two massive pine trees uprooted, also in the Avenue Gardens. Even though much larger with all the trunk and roots – up to 45 metres of tree each – their damage is more localised and they have fallen in places where we can leave the bulk of the trunks. Mark just about wept the next day when he found the handsome abies in the park had also fallen.



This abies, outlined in red



The high bridge in the park is beneath the abies

That was just the big trees. There are branches and smaller trees down but they seem minor in comparison.

There are three roads that give access to our place. As the initial fury abated, I drove around to make sure none of our boundary trees had fallen to block the road. I had walked out earlier to the road and found passers-by efficiently dealing to one of our branches without even coming in to tell us. How handy to live rurally where people just happen to have chainsaws. It was the last road open and to drive it meant driving under power lines further down the road which had a tree resting on them.



The road to the left at the bottom of our place – not our tree or power lines, thank goodness.



And the road to the right down the bottom of the hill. Again, not our trees or power lines but this repair was a major that took several days



The only road left open with a minor tree suspended on the power lines. This was the one that took our power out for 36 hours.



Practical passers-by dealing to an immediate problem. This was the only major branch of ours that fell onto the road.

Mark and I were completely numbed for the first two days by the sheer enormity of the damage. It wasn't helped by having no electricity and when the power goes out, we lose running water. Like most rural people these days, we depend on electric pumps to get water to the taps. 36 hours without water and electricity is difficult but everything looked more manageable when they were restored.



Starting the clean up in the Avenue Gardens. That was a complex woodland, herbaceous planting beneath. Note the use of 'was'.

Our arborist and his apprentice gave us priority and were here by 8am on Monday. Lloyd and Zach have thrown themselves into the task of cleaning up and we are making progress. There is a long way to go but at least we are not in as bad a situation as we were last Sunday.



The Avenue Gardens on Sunday



Same view by Wednesday, we had it to this stage but that is only the paths cleared, not the gardens

Three things I have learned this week: firstly that it is harder to have no running water than no electricity. Never have I been so grateful that we are a five loo establishment...

Secondly, when people are in in immediate shock at what has happened, well-intentioned comments from Pollyannas are not helpful. Comments like, 'look at this as a new opportunity' or 'at least nobody died and your house is not damaged so it could have been worse' carry a high irritation factor. We do not need to be told that. The time comes soon enough to look forward but it takes time to process what has happened first.

Thirdly, in a crisis and its aftermath, people are very kind. I can get Pollyannaish over that. More than once, the kindness of others, including strangers, has brought tears to my eyes.



I took this photo of the beautiful elaeocarpus tree with its buttressed roots last week



That skeleton in the centre of the photo is what remains of it this week

It has been a tough week but the final word probably rests with the neighbour who had walked over and was talking to me at the back doorstep when the largest pine snapped and fell before our eyes. "This is a taste of what is to come in the next 20 to 25 years," she said. Climate change. I fear she is right.



Wednesday, three days on, and progress is being made

Postscript: Technically, Cyclone Dovi is usually described in NZ as either 'ex-tropical cyclone Dovi' or 'the remnants of Cyclone Dovi' which means it is way more intense when cyclones hit full force on Pacific islands. I have to keep reminding myself of this. I looked up the difference between a cyclone, a hurricane and a tornado and it is geographic. South of the equator we call them cyclones, north of there they are called hurricanes except north west where they are often called typhoons. So now you know.

Post postscript: I saw screen shots of extreme right conspiracist chat pages who worked out that Cyclone Dovi = C Dovi and – OMG – ***C Dovi is an anagram for Covid.*** To them, this is proof of a conspiracy by our government to create a cyclone event to try and dislodge the 'convoy occupiers' blocking roads in Central Wellington and taking over Parliament grounds. So now you know that too.



I offered free firewood and pinecones on a local Facebook page and the firewood disappeared very quickly. Mark and I are amused at just how many older men there are in our local area who still have chainsaws and time on their hands.

This entry was posted in Abbie's column and tagged Cyclone Dovi, Mark and Abbie Jury, Tikorangi: The Jury garden on 20 February 2022 [<https://jury.co.nz/2022/02/20/hit-by-cyclone-dovi/>].

29 thoughts on "Hit by Cyclone Dovi"

Mike Henry

20 February 2022 at 8:31 am

I feel for you and Mark. Its heartbreaking to lose the history of those trees that can't be replaced and the damage caused to your garden. A huge undertaking ahead – best wishes Abi. We have also just lost a huge Claret Ash and 2 Crypromerias both about 70 years old – the weather is definitely changing.



Abbie Jury Post author

20 February 2022 at 9:08 am

It is scary to think that this is just the start, isn't it? Good luck with your clean up, too.

Kate Ericksen

20 February 2022 at 8:33 am

I feel your pain with the loss of those beautiful old trees. I hate strong wind more than anything else. I was looking anxiously out the window at our beloved trees as Dovi hit us at the top of the South Island. Fortunately it was nowhere near as bad as Cyclone Gita 2-3 years ago when we lost some trees too and the landscape was scarred with landslides.



Abbie Jury Post author

20 February 2022 at 9:07 am

We dodged Gita entirely but you are in an area prone to slipping and flooding? That makes it worse. Good that you escaped Dovi.

Angela

20 February 2022 at 8:40 am

So very sad to see such majestic old trees reduced to firewood. They have lived through many domestic and world events but end up succumbing to the fierceness of the winds we experienced. I think much of the sadness also comes with the personal memories that are attached to gardens and the work that went into it's establishment and development. As rural folk we too understand the reliance on power for water since outages are a common occurrence around us mainly due to fallen trees. I have to confess to a slight overreaction on storing water ahead of the forecast event with every conceivable vessel being filled with water and it all got eventually used for loos or vege garden. With situations such as these it can only be one step at a time on the road to recovery and being kind to yourselves.



Abbie Jury Post author

20 February 2022 at 9:05 am

We expect our old trees to fall from time to time, but it has only ever happened one at a time before and we can cope with that. This is just devastation. We have one tap that will gravity feed but it is several hundred metres from the house but we were grateful for that. Otherwise we would be totally dry when the power goes off. And it is fine if the power is only cut for a few hours. 36 hours was a challenge but our immediate neighbours had no power for about 4 or 5 days which would have been so much harder.



James

20 February 2022 at 8:45 am

So sorry to hear about the destruction. I've been hearing about the huge storm that has been making its way across England and Europe. Yes, we all fear this is the future for us. Here in the northeast US storms are more frequent and more intense.



Abbie Jury Post author

20 February 2022 at 8:54 am

It is the sheer scale of damage here, James. We can deal with small trees and roll up our sleeves and manage when the massive old trees fall if it happens one at a time. Having so many down at once is more daunting. But I think this is what climate change looks like for us, personally, and I did not have 'hit hard by a cyclone' on my personal bingo card of possible climate change impacts. There I was thinking that we are safe from flooding, safe from slips and certainly far enough from the sea not to be personally affected by rising sea levels. A mini tornado is a possibility but I never even considered a cyclone.



Thistles and Kiwis

20 February 2022 at 8:53 am

I saw that conspiracy thing about C Dovi as well. Sigh! I just hope it all ends soon, but the problem is, there is such a disparate group of protestors.



Abbie Jury Post author

20 February 2022 at 8:57 am

I have been glad at times to have other things to worry about this week. I just don't understand why the police don't clear the roads, wheel clamp the vehicles that are in legal parks or off the road but overstaying and dismantle the tents. Sure, they have a legal right to protest and that is fine to continue but they have turned it into an occupation and that is different.



dinahmow

20 February 2022 at 9:02 am

It's odd, not quite knowing how to respond in print on a public page. Expletives I might use in my own house, or perhaps to a friend, are in the same basket as the pollyannas and the extremist nutters. But I have been through a few bad storms and the best I can offer is sympathy and courage. Also, thank you for writing this post.



Abbie Jury Post author

20 February 2022 at 9:08 am

Thanks, Dinah. Appreciated.

Alexandra O'Brien

20 February 2022 at 9:46 am

Abby, it's hard to know what to say in the face of such destruction. My heart goes out to you both. So many years of work smashed to pieces, plants lost and irreplaceable big trees fallen. I was upset at seeing my tall flowering plants lying flattened and a beautiful Tibouchina split into 3 pieces – I now realise the scale of the damage you suffered in Taranaki. I could weep for you, I really could. Take care of yourselves.



Abbie Jury Post author

20 February 2022 at 1:24 pm

Thank you for empathizing with us.

debtait

20 February 2022 at 11:08 am

Hi Abbie

I'm so sorry to learn of the loss and damage to your tree friends and companions! I have just completed an on-line course in interspecies communication – human to tree, animal or plant. May sound woo but no, not at all. Think of horse whisperers, the documentation of communication with plant Devas at Findhorn or Perelandra. Or the work of Dr Edward Bach who pioneered the Bach Flower remedies. The course convenor, Saskia von Diest, has a PhD in Biology, lives in Wales and her inter-species communication enterprise is called Ecofluency. If you are interested I can send a direct link if you email me. (Fingers crossed that this, my third attempt to comment, finally makes it :-)



Abbie Jury

Post author

20 February 2022 at 8:38 pm

Thanks, Deb. That is very kind of you but I just don't have the head space to deal with a new project or field of study at this time.

Tim Dutton

20 February 2022 at 1:37 pm

Your post brought tears to my eyes too. Dovi spared us from tree-downing winds and we mainly just got prolonged rain from it here, briefly heavy, which was a relief. We wish you all well with the prolonged clean-up.



Abbie Jury

Post author

20 February 2022 at 8:36 pm

Thanks, Tim. Appreciated.

Paddy Tobin



20 February 2022 at 10:41 pm

Oh, good lord, Abbie, what a dreadful experience. Such grand trees, such an inheritance, connections to past generations of the family as well as their own intrinsic beauty. There is a long period of cleaning-up in front of you and long days of missing old garden companions, intrinsic parts of the garden, the shapers of the garden really. I share the fear of the misery of loss of electricity, water supply and toilets. We had two storms in recent days and, as luck would have it, the sewage pipe blocked up and overflowed right in the middle of one storm. I cursed it loudly as I worked to clear it. Best wishes for the future.



Abbie Jury Post author

21 February 2022 at 8:33 am

Well, as they say, there is always someone worse off! I do not envy you clearing the sewage pipe.... and at least Dovi hit us in summer whereas Eunice came in your winter. I have been thinking how grim it must be for those people without power for days on end in a UK winter. I suppose many at least have gas for cooking but tough with short days and cold temperatures. We are well on the way to getting the initial clean-up underway and are more philosophical about the damage than we were a week ago.



Paddy Tobin

21 February 2022 at 8:37 am

Dovi will certainly have changed the face of the garden.



bittster

21 February 2022 at 4:00 am

Oh my gosh. I'm glad to hear you are on the path to cleaning things up, but the pine falling out of the blue and well past the winds of the storm is chilling and makes one nervous about weakened trees. Fascinating the global overlords can send such a large storm out your way so easily, and a little arrogant to make their so super secret plot obvious by naming the storm after it's mission. All the best for your recovery, I'm sure the loss is only compounded by the cost of dealing with it.

**Abbie Jury** Post author

21 February 2022 at 8:36 am

No, the pines (three enormous ones) fell at the height of the storm, not after. At least it didn't act like skittles and bowl the lot! We are keeping a close eye on ones we fear are weakened which is why we must drop what remains of the massive eucalypt. But we are making progress even if the path ahead is long. Thanks for your thoughts and sympathy.

**tonytomeo**

21 February 2022 at 8:14 am

Oh my! Although we all know that trees fall down or break apart naturally in the forests, the arborists who I work for find it saddening when such old trees that people see and appreciate succumb. It is much worse to lose a tree that has historical significance, or has been in our landscapes longer than we can remember.

**Abbie Jury** Post author

21 February 2022 at 8:37 am

Our big losses were ones planted back in the 1870s by Mark's great grandfather. We are used to coping when they fall one at a time. It is having to deal with several and the sheer scale of the damage that put us into shock this time but onward and upward. We have it in hand now. I think....

**tonytomeo**

21 February 2022 at 12:38 pm

That is what I mean; losing trees that had been there for so long, and that were so important. A valley oak that was a few centuries old fell here a few years ago, but it was not planted, and only a few people could remember that their parents remembered it. My Pa likely met it at one time or another, but could not distinguish it from other trees that used to live in the same area prior to development. Heck, a century ago, trees that were several centuries old were clear cut harvested, and no one cared.

**Pat Webster**

21 February 2022 at 2:16 pm

To lose one tree is sad, to experience what you and Mark are living through is beyond words. My sincere sympathies.



Abbie Jury Post author

21 February 2022 at 8:32 pm

You would understand, Pat, with so many trees yourself. We are philosophical when they fall one at a time. We know some of our trees are near the end of their lifespan at 150 years (though some are rock solid and should live much longer). But to lose several and for some to land on highly detailed plantings, causing huge destruction, was a shock. But we are making progress in that area at least and now have a clearer picture. Though we won't know how much of the herbaceous material has survived until spring. Most of it is no longer visible now!



Pat Webster

22 February 2022 at 3:25 am

I hope the plantings manage to recover from the damage and the shock.

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