

What to Do After a Freeze

You know you are a true gardener when you are willing to use your own bed sheets to protect your favorite plants! A hard freeze this week has had all of us scrambling to find every blanket we could to cover our plants. Even with protection, such cold temperatures mean that some of your plants were probably damaged in the cold. If you are trying to figure out what to do now, see the tips below. As the first tip says, the best thing to do is to be patient. We are not too far from our spring season when everything will grow, flower, and recover.

- 1. Be Patient** – This is the hardest part of dealing with winter damage. There is no pruning allowed until we are past any risk of frost or freeze. The damaged foliage will serve as an insulating layer if more cold weather comes through. We usually start pruning around end of February. The only exception to this rule is if a plant is truly dead or if parts of a plant or palm are rotting, remove the plant or damaged areas from the garden to avoid spreading disease.
- 2. Don't Fertilize** – Fertilizer may stimulate growth on plants, but if we get cold again that tender new growth will be extremely sensitive to the cold. Even cold hardy plants should not typically be fertilized this time of year. At the start of spring, give everything a good prune and a dose of Kerby's fertilizer to stimulate a wonderful burst of new growth.
- 3. Do Water** – After a cold night, plants will have lost lots of water. Be sure to water them well at the roots so that as they warm back up, water is available to replace what was lost to the cold winds.
- 3. Plan your Spring Garden** – As you drive around town, you may see a palm or shrub completely frost-burnt in one yard, but look perfectly green in another, even in houses on the same street. Surprisingly, the temperature around the area varies widely depending on a number of factors, including the direction a house faces and the number of trees. Take a look at your own garden and see which spots were warmest and which were coldest. Plan accordingly for the spring and you'll be able to pick which plants are likely to perform best for each spot in your garden.
- 4. Damaged Palms** – For palm trees that sustained cold damage, the same tip applies - have patience. When you do prune your palm trees, try to prune only damaged fronds off. Over-pruning a palm tree by removing all fronds can hurt its ability to gather nutrients and limit its chances of surviving. Leave as much green as possible, or if there aren't any green fronds, prune about half of the damaged ones off and wait for a new frond to grow in the spring before pruning off the remainder of the old fronds.
- 5. Protect from Disease** – While the freezing temperatures damage the plant, it is usually disease that actually causes them to die. To keep diseases at bay, especially on damaged palms, spray a copper fungicide every 10 days or so. This will help the plants fight off disease until they can take over on their own again.

