



Palo Pinto County Master Gardeners

February was a Frozen Fiasco...Now What about my Plants?

The brutal weather in mid-February had a major impact on plants in North Central Texas. You may be wondering whether your plants will recover or not and how to care for them post-freeze. This article will share information and resources that may answer some of your questions.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension agent - Smith County, Greg Grant, has compiled a great resource on this topic. You can find it on the Aggie Horticulture Facebook page in a post dated March 1. Grant addresses concerns about many plants. Here are a few of the ones he discusses and summaries of his suggestions.

- Evergreen, woody shrubs - Grant suggests waiting until shrubs resprout before cutting away dead stems. He says there will likely be no blooms and old foliage will fall off.
- Perennials - Try to wait until April 1 to trim the dead parts, then wait until mid-spring to see what comes back.
- Roses - These will have varying degrees of freeze damage, depending on the type of rose. Many will resprout from the snow line. Once you can tell which stems are brown and dead, trim them off, apply lawn fertilizer, and they should be fine by fall.
- Herbs - Many of our herbs prefer mild winters and dry soil. Grant believes most rosemary plants will not survive. Some lavender may have survived, but generally dies in wet conditions.
- Vines - Native vines like coral honeysuckle and crossvine may be fine, but others such as Carolina Jessamine and confederate jasmine may be damaged. English Ivy may have foliage damage only. If plants resprout, cut them back to the new growth, even if it is to the ground.
- Turf grass - St. Augustine and centipede lawns may have dead areas. Mow as normal, but avoid pre-emergent herbicide which can cause further injury to damaged grass. Wait to fertilize until mid-April when nights are warmer.
- Live Oaks - By now you may have heard discussion about the live oaks and their brown leaves. These will fall off and new foliage should appear. This is a case of "wait and see" how the trees survive.
- Fruit Trees - Most are cold-hardy. Wait until the trees bloom, then prune to live growth. (For a tutorial on pruning fruit trees, see the March 19 Aggie Horticulture Facebook Live event. The video is available on their Facebook page.)

Extension Agent, Greg Grant, advises that the only solution to any damage done by the freeze is warmer weather and longer days. Once plants have started to grow, you can tell what to cut back and which plants need to be replaced. In some cases, it may take months to see if a plant has survived.

Another trusted resource for plant advice is horticulturist Neil Sperry. Sperry has several posts on his Facebook page that address readers' concerns about specific plants.

Visit the link below to learn more about the Texas Master Gardener program.
<http://palopinto.agrilife.org/master-gardener-overview/>



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A few plants he discusses include:

- Nandina - If your nandinas have freeze damage, Sperry suggests trimming all stems back to three inches from the ground, apply lawn fertilizer, and water deeply. He does not recommend cutting less drastically. If you do, all the new growth will be at the top of the stems. (3/13/21 post)

Indian Hawthorn - Bend twigs and branches - if they snap and are dried and brown inside, they are dead. If plants are partially dead, you will have to decide whether it is worth it to let them re-grow. (3/16/21 post)
- Live Oaks - In addition to advice similar to Grant's, Sperry suggests applying an all nitrogen lawn fertilizer to the area beneath the tree and in 3-4 weeks, the tree should be fine. (3/3/21 post)

Several Palo Pinto Master Gardeners shared observations of their plants and gardens since the freeze. Carolyn Barnard says her Knockout Roses have sprouted green leaves and are looking great, and her abelia that was planted last fall seems to be coming back from the roots. After removing the damaged leaves from her spineless prickly pear, she hopes it will recover. Karen Brown noted that the Carolina Jessamine at the County Extension office has a green sprout coming from its base. The Henry Duelberg salvia there has already sprouted and looks great. Donna Winbourn observed that her thyme and mint are coming up and several roses are all leafing out well. One of her clematis vines is doing okay, but a different variety is questionable. Donna used frost cloth to protect some of her plants, including her newly planted onions and reports the onions are doing fine. One lesson I have learned from this weather event, is to have frost cloth on hand and use it. It can make a real difference in the survival of your plants, even with the severe temperatures we experienced in February. Another lesson that was reinforced was the value of using native plants in landscapes. In my butterfly garden, I am already seeing the cone flowers, zexminia, and fall aster returning and my four nerve daisies are already blooming. I was also reminded to be patient with my plants when I saw new leaves sprouting on the abelia that looked brown, brittle, and dead.

"Adopt the pace of nature. Her secret is patience." Ralph Waldo Emerson

Submitted by Kara Lynn Greenfield, Palo Pinto Master Gardener

*For more information about the Palo Pinto County Master Gardener Program, please call the Palo Pinto County Extension office at 940-659-1228.

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