



HELPFUL INFORMATION

FREEZE DAMAGE ASSESSMENT

In late December, our area experienced an unusual polar vortex deep freeze event in which temperatures stayed below freezing for nearly five days, with two nights of single-digit temps and strong winds. We understand that you may be concerned about plants, trees, and shrubs in your landscape.

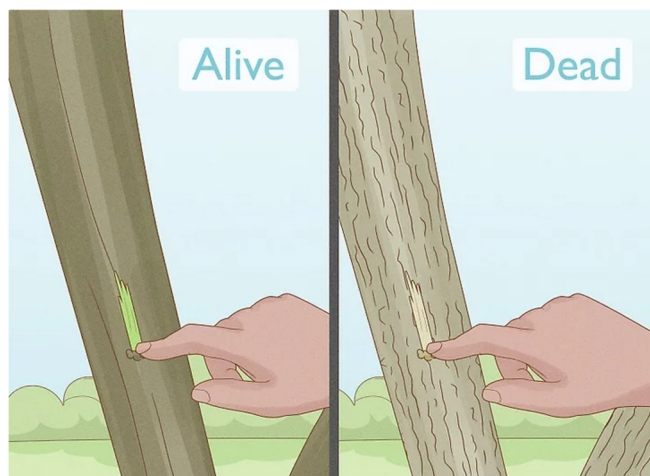
EXAMPLES OF SHRUBS SHOWING SIGNS OF FREEZE DAMAGE LOCALLY:

**Acuba, Elaeagnus, Wax Leaf Ligustrum, Tea Olive, Camellia
Indian Hawthorn, Loropetalum, Rosemary, etc.**

Many evergreens now appear gray or black, some have almost completely defoliated, which has led many people to call Ooltewah Nursery asking, “Is my plant dead?” or “Can I save a plant that has been frozen for several days?” Our horticultural staff is ready to help you navigate what to do and when to do it. The answers will depend upon the type of plant and the duration of cold that it experienced. While we cannot change what happened, we can assess the damage. Here’s what you can do now...

THE SCRATCH TEST

You can *usually* tell if a plant is still alive by gently scratching the bark on its main stem/trunk. If it is green immediately underneath (you will see white deeper), that is a good sign that there is still life. If you are not seeing green, the plant may be dead at that point. Try the scratch test again lower on the trunk. Even if your plant appears to be dead all the way to the ground, some things will regrow from the roots, while others may be lost altogether. If it has not shown signs of regrowth by June 1st, you can presume it is dead.



EXAMINE THE BRANCHES

Take a close look at the branches starting with the tips. Freeze damaged area can often appear

darker than healthy dormant wood. You may have to look closely to see any difference.

Next try to bend the tips of any branch you suspect has cold damage and see what happens. If it bends and feels pliable, it is probably alive. If it quickly snaps off and breaks, that limb is likely dead. Try this in several spots to determine how far the damage reaches.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO NEXT?

If you are seeing some freeze damage, you will need to prune back the dead sections. **WAIT** to prune until late March to do any trimming. Pruning now can stimulate new growth and we are still subject to freezes. The general rule of thumb regarding pruning is not to remove more than 30% of the plant; however, in some cases, you might have to prune significant amounts of the plant away that has been damaged.

After pruning, apply fertilizer in early spring (March 15th) to encourage new growth. With a little T.L.C. and patience, you may be surprised at how well your plant recovers. The full extent of the damage may not be known until spring. We are here to help you.



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