

## Addressing Freeze Results

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Questions on dealing with freeze damage are the dominant gardening issue after the record low temperatures in mid- November

If your bougainvillea, Chinese hibiscus, and other tropical plants in containers were unprotected in the freeze, the tops are frozen back. Depending on how sheltered the location where they were growing is, the whole plant may be killed. To be safe, move them to shelter, so if the roots are alive, they will be protected from the next freeze we have this winter.

Citrus plantings received varying levels of damage. If you did not cover Mexican limes or Meyer lemons the entire top could be killed. Even with a covering, limes will be damaged if there was no heat source under the covering. In my landscape the grapefruit were defoliated. It did not help that they were loaded with fruit. The best strategy with citrus and most cold sensitive plants is to wait and see the full extent of the damage before you cut off wood. The "waiting" also takes into account that we are likely to have another freeze before early March when our last frost date occurs.

In March the new buds from unfrozen wood will emerge and it will be clear where the line between killed and live wood exists. If the root system is intact and some wood above the graft is still alive, limes and lemons will quickly produce a new crown.

For the first time in several years most of the tops of lantanas, duranta, esperanza, firebush, poinciana, salvia and other root hardy, heat-loving plants will be frozen back to the ground. They can be cut back anytime but it is a benefit to the wintering birds if the tops are left in place until early March.

In the flower garden the hard freezes generally killed back the petunias and begonias unless they were in sheltered locations. Sweet peas, snapdragons, dianthus, calendula, and stocks showed some leaf burn, but many beds seem to be continuing to develop blooms. Sweet peas can be replanted by seed. Pansies, violas, and Johnny-jump-ups survived the freeze with bloom intact. Cyclamen and primula are planted in sheltered shady beds so most escaped any bloom-drop, even if they were not covered.

The good news about an early freeze is that some gardeners have not completed planting their winter color and vegetable plantings. The plantings can continue.

In the vegetable garden it is likely that if your broccoli had unharvested heads, the foliage will be damaged. The damage may slow down production of side shoots, but most will recover. There are reports of Swiss chard and beet foliage freezing back. It should quickly send new sprouts up. Spinach, turnips, rutabagas, cabbage, carrots, lettuce and Brussels sprouts seemed to survive with minimal damage. Replant English peas with seed if they froze back completely. If some foliage survived the plants will re-leaf quickly.

Lawns responded to the freeze by browning (limited dormancy) so it is no longer reasonable to consider applying a "winterizer" fertilizer. The freeze also froze back the tops of the horse herb that was serving as a winter lawn in landscapes with shade and shallow soils. The horse herb will resprout so expect to keep it mowed as part of the "winter sustainable lawn" (WSL). The other main component of the WSL,

rescue grass, was not affected by the freeze. AWSL or dormant Bermuda, zoysia or St Augustine lawn does not require frequent irrigation.