

Post Freeze Landscaping Assessments for Homeowners

The recent adverse weather conditions in Houston have adversely affected gardens, as well as causing disruptions to water tanks, pipes, and internet connections. , I wanted to address some questions related to frost damage and offer some guidance on mitigating further harm to your landscape during the Spring cleanup.

As the frost subsides, the temptation to prune and uproot plants that exhibit signs of wear from the winter months may arise. Frost, occurring during cold weather, freezes the water in plant cells, resulting in damage to the cell walls, causing plants to become limp and blackened. The situation is exacerbated in Houston, where the morning sun induces rapid defrosting, leading to the rupture of cell walls.



Unfortunately, if flowerbeds were left exposed, some of the more delicate plants/topicals may have perished. However, evergreen plants with robust natural defense mechanisms are likely to have survived the freeze, making early pruning potentially harmful. To determine whether your plants need more time to recover or have sustained damage, specific signs should be observed. In cases of uncertainty, consulting a horticultural expert is advisable.

The proper assessment of plants after a freeze is crucial, distinguishing between dormancy and death.

- **ROSES:**

Roses, despite the state of flower beds, can benefit from pruning during this time for flourishing growth in spring and summer.



- **PALM TREES:**

For palm trees, while they may appear limp and browned post-freeze, green in the crown signals potential recovery, warranting abstention from pruning.



- **LANTANAS:**

Lantana, resilient as it is, may succumb to temperatures below 28°F. Trimming back old foliage after the last freeze will encourage a neater appearance and stimulate new growth when the warmer temperatures arrive



- **AZALEAS:**

Azaleas, known for surviving low temperatures, may experience some drooping and curling leaves, but the plant itself persists. Trimming should be done after the plant has started to bud out.



- **OTHER SHRUBS:**

Some shrubs may appear untidy following a freeze. If necessary, try cutting them back to the root instead of uprooting to allow for the possibility of a Spring recovery.



- **FRUIT TREES:**

Fruit trees may seem damaged, but refraining from immediate pruning and assessing the condition of branches will help determine survivability.



Takeaways:

BEFORE YOU TAKE A SET OF PRUNERS TO YOUR GARDEN, TAKE NOTE OF THE FOLLOWING:

- If the plant has a green crown, avoid pruning
- Trim messy shrubs and bushes down to the root rather than uprooting
- If leaves turn brown and fall off, the tree may still recover
- Any flowers that bloomed before the freeze are probably lost, but new flowers can still bloom
- Even if it appears everything in your garden is dead, it's probably not as bad as you think