



Cold Damage Recovery

January 12

Question: We suffered damage to several large plants during the recent cold spell. The leaves turned brown and are falling off. The lower branches of the plants seem to be okay. I am reluctant to severely prune the plants because we may get another day or two of extreme cold but they look awful in their current condition. Help!

-Joanne G., e-mail

Answer: Fallen leaves from trees and bushes after a cold front are a good sign. It means that the wood on which they were growing has not been damaged and that the plant should recover. Removing damaged wood now creates two negative situations:

1. It takes away dead wood that often acts as a buffer against another dip in temperature.
2. It helps to stimulate quick regrowth. The new tissues are very susceptible to another possible cold front.

Instead, allow the plants to recover without clipping and pruning. Regrowth will be obvious and may even come quickly. To be very safe, prune away the dead material in mid-February.

Stephen Brown is a horticulture agent with the Lee County Extension Service. Submit questions by calling the horticulture desk at 461-7504 between 9 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. or by e-mailing brownsh@leegov.com. Visit his web page at <http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/hort/GardenHome.shtml> "Garden Doctor" video clips <http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/Hort/Video.shtml> and flowering trees information at http://lee.ifas.ufl.edu/Hort/GardenPubsA_Z.shtml