

FREEZE DAMAGE

TIPS FOR SOUTH TEXAS LANDSCAPES

February 24, 2021 By Kevin Gibbs CEA Horticulture Nueces County

Severe Freezes aren't a common occurrence in South Texas, but they do occur from time to time. Our first instinct is to rush out and remove the damage from our plants, sometimes however, this can cause more harm than good. Below are some tips for dealing with common problems after a freeze.

- Palms—Best thing to do is be patient and wait. Palms only have one growing point called the spear. If the spear dies completely, it's over for the palm. Anything green may still be photosynthesizing and providing energy for the palm, so leave it. Only remove fronds that you can tell are definitely dead.



- Woody plants and shrubs—Most will recover. Use the scratch test to find where the plant is still alive. It will be nice and green at this point. You will need to prune all damaged material out above this point. You can also twist the bark gently to see if it releases or turns; if it does, that section is dead, keep working your way down until you find good tissue. Even some tropical shrubs and trees may have survived, don't just assume that they're dead.
- Tropicals—Most small tropicals will be dead. Prune large tropicals to 6-12 inches high and wait to see if they put back out. Things such as ginger will likely come back up from the roots.

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- Citrus—most citrus will recover as long as they didn't freeze below the graft. This is a swollen area low on the trunk where the rootstock and the scion were joined or grafted. Remove all remaining fruit. Wait a few weeks to see if new growth appears and then prune out any damaged stems or branches.
- Succulents and Cacti—It's best to remove any severely damaged parts. Squishy or Oozey materials should be removed. Work your way down the plant until you find solid tissue and prune to that point, then play the waiting game.
- Turf—As long as the root system survived, turf will recover. Wait a few weeks and if no new growth appears then dig down to see if the roots are still alive. Stop any fertilizers until you have mowed the grass at least twice and then you may resume your regular fertilization program.
- Watering—Plants are stressed after the freeze. It's important to give them water as they need it. If the soil is dry, water, but make sure it dries completely between waterings.
- Fertilization—It's best to avoid using fertilizers until active growth has resumed on all types of plants. Fertilizers are chemicals and could cause additional stress to the plants.

