

What will cold temperatures do to plants?????

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I heard an awful lot of complaints regarding the snowfall this past week! You didn't hear me complain because I love snow. I am not a big fan of the cold but I love snow! The plants appreciate the snow as well at this point because it will help to insulate from the cold temperatures.

I mentioned a while ago the fact that some of my landscape plants were actually leafing out again late this fall (October). This was at a time when all plants should be going into dormancy.

Last week I saw roses still blooming in a landscape in German Village in Columbus. Granted they were more protected than mine, but they should be dormant by now.

It will be interesting next spring to see if any of these plants will be affected by this upcoming cold snap.

When it comes to predicting cold damage to plants, it's almost impossible. There are so many variables involved in this issue.

First of all you not only have cold damage in terms of cold temperatures, you also have freeze and frost damage in the early spring. There are a variety of ways plants are damaged by cold temperatures.

You may recall the winter of 2014 when we got down to -30F. Several landscape and garden plants experienced cold or winter damage. This was due to extreme cold temperatures.

In the spring, we usually experience freeze or frost damage to tender green tissue. This occurs after we have a few nice days of really warm weather which cause plants to grow.

When frosts or freezes come along right after this warm spell, you can pretty much count on some type of damage.

The amount of damage that occurs from cold temperatures is also determined by species. For instance, in the winter of 2014 and back in 1994 when it was equally as cold, the following plants suffered significant dieback: boxwood, roses, lavender, privet, English ivy, weeping cherry, Japanese maples, and a few others.

Some annuals and perennials tolerate frost in the early spring while others don't.

Some plants may not have had a chance to harden off (go dormant) before the really cold temperatures of the last few days. This could lead to branch damage but maybe not complete death.

Again, since there so many factors involved, it's hard to predict. We have to take a wait and see stance. We will wait until next spring to see what happens.

The most important thing in the spring when it comes to diagnosing plant problems is to remember this time of the year and what the plants have experienced. By spring, it's easy to forget that they were still actively growing right up until this cold snap.



Crabapple flowers damaged by early spring frosts



Boxwood severely damaged from 2014 winter temperatures