

Treatment for Your Cold-Damaged Palms

Some of our plants may not have come through the harsh winter too well this year. This seems to be on many minds right now. Many homeowners are facing the possibility of replacing ornamental shrubs and palms, as well as lawn grasses.

You have probably noticed all of the damaged palms in and around Lake City recently. You may even have one or more browned palms in your landscape to deal with. Although it is too early to tell how severely the plant tissues are damaged, you can take some action now. There are a few things you can do to protect the injured palm from disease problems that may develop.

Sometimes the only live portion of a cold-damaged palm is the protected bud, or growing point. The plant will usually recover if this bud is still undamaged, even if all other green parts have turned brown. The trick is to keep plant pathogens from attacking after freeze damage has occurred. These pathogens are not new to your palm, but they aren't as harmful to healthy plants.

You should go ahead and remove only the damaged part of the leaves. If they are partially green, just remove the brown portions. The green leaves or leaf portions that you leave on the tree will help it recover by allowing some photosynthesis to occur. Leaves that are spotted with cold damaged tissue should also be left on the palm for now. This may not look so great right now, but it will speed up recovery.

After pruning, spray the palms with a copper fungicide according to directions on the label. Completely coat the damaged leaves and the healthy bud. Spray again after 10 days with a copper fungicide or another broad spectrum fungicide. The copper spray should not be repeated more than twice because too much copper can become toxic to the plant. The key is to drench that growth point bud and any dead or decaying plant parts around it. This will keep diseases from attacking the bud while the plant is weakened.

You can start a monthly application of a water soluble fertilizer to the leaves after you have finished both fungicide treatments. Observe the growth during the spring and summer. Don't be alarmed if the emerging leaves are abnormal in appearance or color. The palm will usually start to put out normal growth later in the season. If the leaves in the crown collapse during spells of high temperatures in the spring or early summer, consider replacing the palm. This collapse would indicate damage in the trunk that will not repair itself.

Palms are more susceptible to cold-damage if they are deficient in one or more essential plant nutrients. Protect your palms from damage next year by using a balanced palm fertilizer in the summer and early fall.

For more information on caring for your palms, go to <http://solutionsforyourlife.com> And you can find a very informative publication about cold damaged lawn grasses at <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/LH067>

The UF Master Gardeners can help you solve your spring gardening problems. They can be reached at 752-5384 on Tuesday and Thursday mornings. On these mornings, they are also doing pH tests of your garden soil samples. Don't miss their Spring Vegetable Garden presentation at the downtown Lake City library on March 21st at 1pm. Open to all at no charge.

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