

Treating Cold-Damaged Plants

<http://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/care/weather/treating-cold-damage.html>

Water

After a freeze, check the soil around your plants. Plants may not be getting the water they need if the soil has dried out or if the water in the soil is frozen. Watering the area can help defrost the soil and provide your plants with an available source of moisture. Even injured plants need water.

Fertilizer

While you may be tempted to add a little fertilizer to your plants to help speed their recovery hold off. If you fertilize too early you could encourage new growth before cold weather has gone. It's best to wait until spring to begin fertilizer application. Once the danger of frost has passed, an application of fertilizer can help speed recovery.

Pruning

Don't prune cold-damaged plants right away. The dead foliage looks bad, but will help insulate plants from further injury. In the spring, assess the extent of the damage by scraping the bark with your fingernail. Cold-injured wood will be black or brown under the bark. To be certain where to prune, wait until plants begin to sprout new growth.

My Hints:

1. Water BEFORE a freeze, as well as after. Dessication is the enemy of plants in the cold.
2. Unlike most plants, the damaged tissue of herbaceous plants (e.g. Begonias, Elephant Ears, Impatiens, etc) that melt into mush in response to freezing temps should be removed soon after the freeze to avoid rotting the crown of the plant.
3. If you're going to go to the trouble of covering plants with burlap or even a bedsheet, also slip a bucket of warm water underneath. It will help keep the air under the covering warm, as water loses heat slower than air.