



Dealing with Winter Damage

First step, carefully assess the damage.

Second step, look for the wisest solution.

Yes this winter was a tough one, but trees, shrubs and plants have a remarkable way of bouncing back, especially if we give them a little help and lots of time. Please don't assume if it's brown, it's finished, or if it's broken in places it's dead, and please do not rip plants out of the ground without doing your homework first. There is a chance that if you leave plants in and treat them, they could come back. So, what do you do to assess and treat the damage? Here are the highlights...

Q: What do I do with all the broken branches/ stems on my trees?

A: Cut off all broken branches and those which pulled bark off major stems. Clear up rough edges so there is a smooth transition from the bark that's left to the peeled stem and no place for insects or disease to take hold.

Q: How can I get my trees to grow back nicely?

A: Prune existing branches of trees back to help direct new spring growth to fill in areas where lost limbs have left

gaps. Exceptions include spruce, fir, pines and Japanese maples which should be pruned in mid to late May when new growth appears.

Q: Is there any way to save trees that are bent over? A: To ensure they will straighten up, carefully stake all trees which have been bent over from snow and ice. Do this ASAP, especially before the sap begins to flow.

Q: I'm pretty sure the ice completely destroyed my deciduous tree... is there any way to know if it's worth trying to save?

A: It depends on the tree. Sometimes a hard prune will encourage fresh new growth and renew the tree. If the main trunk is split in half it's often better to remove the tree and plant a new one.

Q: My cedar hedges are totally misshapen. How do I tidy them up?

A: Carefully bend them back in place, secure with rebar if possible. You may have to top them, but this will make it easier for them to grow back in nice form.

Q: The snow has melted enough to expose large brown sections on my evergreen shrubs. What do I do? A: Wait for the

snow to completely melt so that you can assess the plant fully. If you gently scrape the bark on the stem and there is green wood underneath, that's a great sign. If this is the case do a light pruning to cut out all of the dead bits and tidy it up. If it's brown under the bark, it's likely done, but wait until it warms up and then look for signs of new growth again.

Q: Broadleaf evergreens can be pruned anytime, right? A: Broken broadleaved plants, that are often brittle, can easily be pruned back to get rid of any damage but on rhodos, camellias and azaleas. Hold off on getting the plants in good shape until the new growth begins. They will flush out more easily and fill in nicely at that time of year.

Q: Many of my perennials look completely dead. Should I just dig them up?

A: Most perennials do die down for winter so don't be too worried just yet. Evergreen plants like euphorbias, perennial grasses etc. may have burnt foliage, so lightly clip their tops for a tidy up, but

wait for new growth to begin before pruning them back and giving them a more thorough cleaning.

Q: Some of my bulbs were coming up before the ice storm. Will they make it?

A: All bulbs and garlic will be just fine. Don't worry!

Q: It's warmed up enough that I planted some annuals outside. What do I do if we get another cold snap? A: Cold hardy

annuals, like pansies and primulas, can be draped with a sheet of N'Sulate fabric. It makes a 10°C difference in temperature!

Q: I didn't winterize my banana or windmill palm. Is there any hope? A:

Remove any dead or brown leaves, but don't be surprised if they didn't make it. Give them a chance to recover though before planning a replacement.

Remember, some plants normally take a long time to show new growth, and after a hard winter it may take even longer. Hibiscus, clematis, peaches and Trumpet Vines take their time, so be patient. You can always do the 'scratch test' to check for green under the bark. If it's green, it's good (so keep waiting)!



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