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ask Sam

question

Dear Sam,

I have some trees that were hit hard by the freeze last fall (see picture). Will the plants live?
Thanks, – Kari, Laramie

Dear Kari,

Last fall seemed to last forever, until we had a temperature nosedive in November. Many of our ornamental plants had not gone into dormancy fully when the cold temperatures hit. As a result, many of them, both woody and herbaceous perennials, suffered major freeze damage.

Here is what to look for:

- Blackened leaves and stems.

- Evergreens are most susceptible.
- Dieback from the outside of the plant inward.
- Woody plant bark may develop vertical cracks, especially on the south sides of the trunks.
- Bark can also completely split all the way around, girdling the plant and essentially killing it.

There is not much to be done after the damage has occurred. When spring arrives, assess perennial plants for damage. Branches that have died back will stay brown and not leaf out. These should be pruned. Once frost damage has occurred, there is no remedy other than pruning and proper cultural care during the growing season.

We have probably lost many of our evergreens due to last fall's cold snap. If the plant is brown and does not send out new growth in the spring, remove it – it will not recover.

– Sam



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answer