

SAVING PALMS AFTER THE FREEZE

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As a follow-up to last week's article, I wanted to focus a bit more on how to care for cold-damaged palms. Cold weather in general slows the growth of palms to a point where they can become stressed and more open to opportunistic disease organisms. Freezing temperatures actually destroys plant tissues sometimes causing damage that is around for years. However, if the bud is still alive and well and only the fronds are damaged, there is some hope that the palm can recover.

Frozen palms are weakened palms that have damaged tissue which certain plant diseases may attack as soon as warmer weather begins. Our goal is to intervene with some preventative action. Bacteria are normally present all of the

time on palms but are generally harmless. However, as soon as dead palm tissue is available, a primary or secondary plant pathogen can take advantage of this food source and possibly kill the palm. To protect a cold-damaged palm, begin by accessing the damaged tissue. While dead portions of the fronds can be carefully removed, it is very important that any frond that has some green portion present be left alone as some photosynthesis can still occur and aid in the recovery. Using a copper spray (including a spreader-sticker to help it adhere to the fronds better) spray the palm as per label instructions. Do not use a fungicide on palms bearing edible fruit that might be consumed. This initial spray is followed 10 days later (or as recommend on the

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Severe damage from freeze and frost



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label) with a second copper spray, again as per label instructions. Use only two copper sprays as there is the possibility of copper toxicity developing. Even when the cold damage has been so bad that the spear leaf pulls out, there is still the chance that the palm bud is still alive. Clean out as much dead tissue as possible and then drench the bud with copper fungicide when you spray.

To support the recovery of your palms, nutrients need to be applied. A nutrient foliar spray suitable for palms should be applied to the foliage as per label instructions (generally once per month). This nutrient supplement will add greatly to the recovery of the palm. On newly planted or young palms, continue the foliar nutri-

ent sprays into the summer. Established palms should receive a granular, slow-release fertilizer (8-2-12-4 Mg plus micronutrients) as per label directions and repeated every three to four months.

Again, recovery is going to be slow, so you need to exercise patience. Hidden damage may show up months later as deformed, brown or abnormal fronds appear. The palm will grow out of this latent damage with time. Freeze damage to the trunk that provides water to the fronds may also have occurred and is a more serious problem. This issue may show itself during the first of our hot weather with the sudden collapse of the fronds. This damage is permanent and will eventually kill the palm.

While not every palm will recover, it is imperative that you be patient, give your palms a chance, and support their recovery. Before you know it, with time, your palms should look back to normal again!

Resources:

- Meerow, A.W. (2003) *Treating Cold-Damaged Palms*. UF/IFAS Extension Service.

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For more information about our Florida Yards and Neighborhoods Program, please contact our FYN Horticulture Program Assistant, Allison Turner, at 764.4351 or email Allison.Turner@CharlotteFL.com. Allison can help educate you about the FYN Program so you can create a beautiful, Florida-Friendly landscape that saves you time and money while conserving precious water resources and reducing pollution.

**contact a
MASTER GARDENER**
on the Plant Lifeline from 1:00pm-
4:00pm Monday, Wednesday, and
Friday at 764.4340 or by email
Master.Gardener@charlottefl.com.

You can also visit them at
one of our many **Plant Clinics**
around the county:
<http://charlotte.ifas.ufl.edu/PlantClinics.pdf>



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