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## HELPING YOUR LANDSCAPE AFTER THE FREEZE

The week of January 19<sup>th</sup>, we had a prolonged cold wave throughout Florida, and many of our customers are asking: "What is going to happen to my plant material?". We would like to explain how your trees and shrubs have been affected.

Winter damage can show up very quickly, or may take time for the effects to be seen. Plants that were unable to tolerate low temperatures will suddenly turn brown, droop, and almost appear to have melted. Philodendrons, ixoras, hibiscus, bougainvillea, copper plant, croton, allamanda, and succulents such as bird of paradise and travelers palm are most commonly affected. However, many plants not suited to your part of the state are showing signs of winter damage. Certain palms will not tolerate the cooler temperatures.

By contrast with this rapid death, some plants may leaf out in the spring, appear normal, then suddenly wilt, turn brown and die during hot weather. This can occur even as late as summer and early fall. Woody tissue may appear green, but upon further examination of the stem, you may find a dead section. This damaged area will not allow water and nutrients to move to the upper section of the plant. Once the flowers and leaf buds use up the stored water and nutrients in the upper stem, the entire plant can die rapidly. This type of death is often confused with other problems. Cutting away the damaged tissue may help new buds develop from remaining lower healthy tissue.

TruGreen will help plants recover by providing fertilizer. Roots on surviving plants are still active and need the nutrients in the fertilizer we apply. You can help your landscape by using good irrigation practices. Living root systems need adequate moisture, and if it does not rain for 2 to 3 weeks, your plants may need water. We will also minimize any active insect or disease pests. The plants are already struggling to survive, and by suppressing these pests, we help relieve a large stress.

How about pruning? It is very tempting to go in and severely prune affected plants. In all probability, we are past the any more hard freezes. However, until the middle of March, it would be best to only prune off any obviously dead branches. Thereafter, severe pruning can be done. Certain spring flowering plants such as azaleas, may give a disappointing flower show this spring. Some flower buds may have been killed by the cold.

*An important note on palm trees:* leaves should be not completely removed from a palm if any green is showing on the frond. The green intact portions of the leaf are important to assure adequate photosynthesis during the recovery stage.

A final observation: one of the best way to reduce cold injury and to hasten recovery from cold damage is to maintain healthy trees and shrubs. TruGreen will continue to fertilize and minimize insect and disease pests. You can help with proper watering, mulching and pruning. Please call us if you have any questions.