



DR. R.E. MOON +
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Gardening by the Moon

February 2024 Newsletter



Effects of Freezing Temperatures on Plant Material

by Dr. Moon



Is your landscape looking sad? You might be observing some of the following symptoms in plants due to the freezing temperatures and plants not being acclimated to this condition:

- **Live Oak Trees** – Leaves will turn grayish brown and fall off the tree earlier than usual in early spring. This is not a problem for these trees since they drop leaves annually. Fertilize these trees this month.
- **Dormant Trees** – Red Oak, Bur Oak, Chinese Pistache, Lacebark Elm, Cedar Elm, Ash, etc., should have no damage since most of these trees had already gone dormant before freezing temperatures. Fertilize these trees this month.
- **Narrow-Leaved Evergreen Trees** – Conifers, Eastern Red Cedar, Juniper, and Pine trees will turn reddish from the cold. These plants will have extra needle drops now and in the spring. Do not be concerned about the reddish color. It will go away in the spring with new growth, and there should be no permanent damage. Fertilize these trees this month.
- **Broadleaf Evergreens** – Holly, Ligustrum, Magnolia, and other broadleaf trees can have brown spots on the leaves or brown leaves

caused by the freeze. These leaves will drop off in the spring, and new buds will replace old ones. Some pruning may be required, but wait until spring to do this pruning. These plants should recover. Fertilize these trees this month.

- **Palm Trees** – Palms may have burned fronds that must be removed, but most will recover from this freeze next summer. Fertilize these trees this month.
- **Shrubs** – Shrubs such as holly, boxwood, ligustrum, etc., can have brown spots on the leaves and yellowing or brown leaves caused by the freeze. These plants should recover. The leaves will drop off in the spring, and new buds will replace old ones. Some pruning may be required, but wait until spring to do this pruning. Fertilize in March to improve vigor.
- **Plants with underground rhizomes and spreading roots** – Dianella, Liriope, Ginger, Foxtail Fern, etc.- will have burned leaves. These plants will survive. Cut them back to the ground now or in March. Fertilize them in March to improve their vigor.
- **Ground Cover** – Asian Jasmine, Colorata Euonymus, Honeysuckle, etc., will have burned yellow-brown leaves. These leaves will drop off, and new leaves will come out in the spring. Fertilize in March to improve vigor.
- **Ornamental Grasses** – These grasses should have minor damage since they were dormant. Cut back and fertilize in March.
- **Perennials** – These plants will have burned leaves, cut back in March.
- **Outdoor tropicals** – Plants like philodendrons will have brown leaves that can look water-soaked. Monitor these plants for recovery. If recovery is not achieved, replace them in the spring.
- **Annual Color** – If the color looks water-soaked, it will not recover and must be replaced. However, if the color has brown leaves, they can recover by spring.
- **Cool Season Turf** – Ryegrass and Fescuegrass will turn yellow and brown but recover rapidly from cold events. Fertilize to encourage new growth.
- **Warm Season Turf** - If St. Augustinegrass was not completely dormant going into the freeze, it may have some damage but will recover in the spring. Since the Bermudagrass was going dormant, it should have no permanent damage. Fertilize in the spring to encourage new growth—lower mowing height before fertilizing.

Be patient and give your plants time to recover. Plus, be prepared; we could always have another freeze in February.

Date	Landscape Maintenance Tasks for February
Feb. 1st	Set irrigation timer to run once every two weeks this month. However, with all the rain and freezing temperatures, you want to leave the controller off during these times.
Feb. 4th	Refer to the article above for how and when to cut dead tissue from trees and plants.
Feb. 5th	<p>Mow your turf short and dethatch (if required) to prepare your turf for pre-emergent and fertilizer:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cut your grass shorter now- reducing the mowing height so the dormant turf is cut short encourages the grass to green up quicker in the spring. 2. If you have a thick thatch layer on the soil surface, rent a verticut machine or hire someone who does this work to help remove this excess thatch layer. This will make your turf healthier. 3. Aerate and apply a pre-emergent weed control after dethatching. 4. Fertilize your turf in March. You will see healthy, vigorous turf all summer.
Feb. 11th	Aerate turf before application of pre-emergent and fertilizer.
Feb. 14th	Celebrate Valentine's Day with a beautiful flower bouquet. Roses are always a fine choice, but you can also do something new like– tulips, orchids, sunflowers, peonies, or lilies.
Feb. 18th	<p>Apply pre-emergent weed control. Follow the label directions for how much to use.</p> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: center; gap: 20px;">   </div>
Feb. 25th	Fertilize trees this month with 1/3 to 1/2 pounds of turf fertilizer per inch of tree trunk diameter. Spread the fertilizer evenly from the trunk past the tree's drip line. The rest of your landscape fertilizing will take place in March.
Feb. 28th	Now is when you start planning your spring color for those warmer temps—plan for which colors and where you want your new plantings around

the home. Consider how much sun and shade the flowers will get to pick the right color for the best places in your yard.



Correctly Pruning Crape Myrtles to Avoid Crape "Murder"

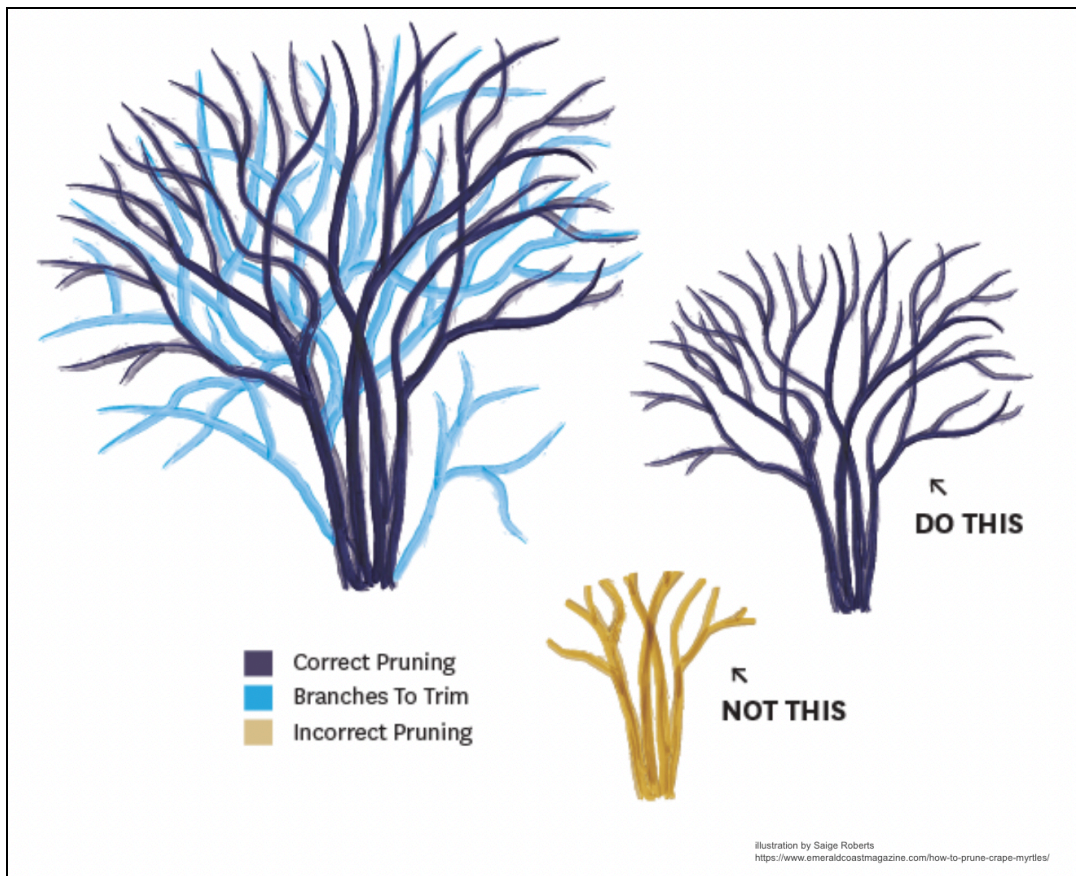
by Dr. Gradilla

Crape myrtle trees are the darling plant of the south. They flower most of the summer, providing long-lasting white, pink, red, or purple blooms. Some varieties are determinate and will grow only 6 to 8 feet in height; some types are dwarf and plant as shrubs, and where there is room for height, some varieties will soar to 25 or 30 feet.

In many instances, homeowners limit crape myrtles' natural beauty by performing crape "murder." This is when you cut the tree back from the top, leaving stubs, consequently shortening the life of your tree. Crape myrtles are best grown as trees, and you should prune them as trees. **Winter is the best time to prune crape myrtles.**

Follow these guidelines when pruning crape myrtles:

- Remove low-hanging branches that interfere with walkways.
- Remove broken and dead branches.
- Remove crossover or rubbing branches.
- Remove sucker growth off the base of the trunk or on the trunk.
- Remove any branches growing into your home structure.
- You do not need to prune old seed heads; they will fall off naturally.



Additional Winter Tips for CM: Crape myrtles have overwintering insects and diseases you can control by spraying thoroughly until runoff with Neem Oil. This product is a safe, non-toxic pesticide for your garden and landscape that is also friendly to the environment and still effective. Neem Oil is your friend and an excellent answer to all these concerns, and you can use it on all trees, shrubs, ground cover, and even in your garden. It means you can keep only one product in your garage for control of most insects, some diseases, and mites.

Bayer Tree and Shrub Granular plant food and insecticide can also control scale and aphids. Daconil can prevent powdery mildew and sooty mold.

The beauty of crape myrtles is worth pruning them correctly and controlling insects and diseases during the winter because they will enhance your landscape and offer you beautiful colors throughout the summer.



Roses are red...

Tree fert is blue
Don't be surprised
if you see that hue
Under the trees
In your communities

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