**IMPORTANT MESSAGE FROM CEPRA**

For the cutbacks on the freeze and frost damaged plant material…….***Please be patient***. We are still in the middle of winter and are experiencing near record breaking high temps this weekend. With that being said, the extended forecast has cold weather returning next week with some areas potentially seeing frost, again. We do not want to cut anything back just yet and run the risk of further damage to the plant material. Homeowners will be responsible for the replacement of any dead or declining plant material so we are trying to save what we can. It may take more time for some of the plants to fully show the extent of the damage. ***Please be patient***. Our plan is to continue to monitor the extended forecast and prepare for cutbacks once it appears we are clear of any harmful temps. Right now, that target date is the first, but quite possibly the second week in March. It is going to take a bit longer to get through the community because the cutbacks take longer than a normal "trim".

Following is some information from the Cepra staff that further discusses what to expect from freeze and frost damage for your review. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out.

# Turfgrass Recovery Following Historic Freeze

Sunday morning brought a historic weather event to Central Florida, with approximately 10 hours of freezing temperatures across the Orlando area. Some properties experienced slightly more or less exposure, but the result is largely the same: most turfgrasses are now semi-dormant to completely dormant.

## What's next? How quickly will turf recover?

Recovery will be slow. We are facing several weeks of cold nighttime temperatures, which will significantly limit turfgrass activity. While nutrients such as Nitrogen, Magnesium, and Iron are necessary for chlorophyll production, turfgrass recovery is ultimately driven by **light, water, and air temperature**.

Turfgrass requires approximately **8 hours of direct, unfiltered sunlight** per day to produce enough photosynthesis to support active recovery. "Direct sunlight" means exposure to higher-energy light wavelengths without cloud cover or filtering. Based on seasonal conditions, we will not consistently receive this level of sunlight for at least **6–8 weeks**, which will slow the greening process.

Many of you may remember research published by **Dr. Troutman in 2006**, which is particularly relevant this year. Following a freeze event, turfgrass uses nearly all of its stored carbohydrates to recover. When carbohydrate reserves are depleted, turfgrass often produces new leaf growth that appears **thin and yellow**, even when properly fertilized.

Until adequate sunlight restores carbohydrate levels, yellowing is expected and normal. While Nitrogen plays an important role in turfgrass growth, **fertilizer alone cannot drive recovery**. As Dr. Travis Shaddox (University of Kentucky, formerly University of Florida, and Harrell's) has long emphasized, light, water, and air temperature account for roughly **90% of turfgrass recovery**, while fertilizer contributes no more than **10%**.

## Setting Expectations

Warmer weather is coming, but **sufficient sunlight for full recovery is still weeks away**. Many will remember the extended period in 2006 when St. Augustinegrass grew actively but remained yellow until seasonal sunlight levels increased enough to restore chlorophyll production. With our dwarf varieties like Pro Vista and Citra Blue, we could face a very late greenup.

This year will require patience. Turf will recover — but it will do so on nature's timeline, not ours.

Addressing the Florida Landscape After a Deep Freeze
Provided by CEPRA

Deep freeze events in Central Florida can be shocking to both plants and people and can cause sudden and dramatic changes in the landscape. Turf grass will discolor, tropical shrubs can burn and defoliate, and palms can appear severely damaged. While these symptoms are alarming, many common landscape plants are capable of recovery when managed correctly. The key to success is understanding how different plant types respond to cold and adjusting post-freeze care accordingly.

After a freeze, plants often look worse before they look better. Foliage may turn black or brown, collapse or appear water soaked. This does not automatically mean that the plant is dead. In many cases, damage is limited to above-ground growth while roots and lower stems remain viable. Cold damage will vary by species and plant type.

*Avoid the urge to prune or remove plants immediately. The dead foliage can help insulate living tissue from subsequent cold events.*

1. **Initial Assessment**: What Damage Looks Like on Common Plants

Leaf Burn or collapse - common and often temporary.
Stem or trunk splitting or cracking - more serious, especially on woody plants and fruit trees.
Discoloration at the base of the plant - may indicate deeper damage.

<u>Typical Symptoms by Plant Group</u>
*Turfgrass* (St. Augustine, Zoysia, Bermuda and Bahia): Rapid browning or straw like color; the moderate turf growth that we experience in the Winter comes to a screeching halt and turf grass will become dormant. Once mild seasonal temperatures return the turf grasses will recover, but this can take weeks or even longer depending upon the turf species and the severity of the cold temperatures.
*Tropical shrub & groundcovers* (Aboricola, Duranta, Ixora, Croton, Hibiscus, Agapanthus): Leaf drop, blackened foliage, and stem dieback. Plants should be monitored for at least 10–21 days before final determinations are made.
*Hardy shrub & groundcovers* (Ligustrum, Viburnum, Podocarpus, Liriope, Jasmine species): Minor leaf burn, usually cosmetic.
*Trees* (Magnolia, Oak, Crape Myrtle): Generally unaffected except if tender new growth is present within the canopy.
*Tropical Trees* (Handroanthus (Formally known as Tabebuia), Foss Silk, Jacaranda, Poinciana, Cassia): Stem, branch dieback with bloom reduction as well as potential complete failure dependent upon the trees location and severity of the freezing temperatures.
*Palms* (Queen, Areca, Foxtail, Pygmy Date and Bismarck: Frond burn or collapse, delayed spear damage is likely, or complete failure is a possibility.
New growth emerging from stems, crowns, or turf runners is the clearest sign of survival.

2. **Pruning Guidelines by Plant Type**

Annuals and Perennials
Spring, Summer & Fall Seasonal Annuals- Begonia, Pentas, Coleus, Impatiens: Remove once temperatures stabilize; most if not all the plants will not recover from the mushy or completely collapsed growth.
Winter Seasonal Annuals-Petunia and Snapdragon: Deadheading or removal of damaged blooms will be required. The plants will set new buds and rebloom in a few weeks.
Viola and Pansy: Are extremely cold hardy and will survive with no damage from freezing temperatures.
Salvia, Lantana and Blue Daze: Cut back after cold risk has passed; regrowth often occurs from the base.
Shrubs

Hibiscus, Ixora, Tibouchina, Arboricola, Firebush and Croton: Delay pruning until spring; prune back to live tissue once new growth is visible.
Ligustrum, Viburnum, Loropetalum: Minimal pruning required; wait for natural recovery.
Trees

Oak, Southern Magnolia: Rarely requires pruning after a deep freeze.
Crape Myrtle: Delay pruning until the end of the winter season as to not initiate new growth that is susceptible to freezing temperatures.
Palms

Pygmy Date, Queen, Areca, Foxtail and Bismarck Palms: Remove only fully brown fronds; do not cut green or partially green fronds and monitor spear leaf for additional damage for several weeks.
Coconut and Royal Palms: Highly freeze-sensitive; monitor spear carefully for several weeks.

3. **Irrigation Considerations for Freeze-Stressed Plants**

Post-freeze dehydration is common across all plant types. Healthy root moisture supports recovery and new growth.

Turf and ornamentals should receive normal irrigation once temperatures rebound.
St. Augustine, Bermuda and Zoysia lawns should not be overwatered while dormant. Overwatering will encourage weed germination and promote pathogen activity.
Inspect irrigation systems carefully - freeze damage to backflow devices, lines and valves is common.

4. **Fertilization: Species-Specific Timing**

Applying fertilizer too early can stress roots and encourage weak growth.

Turfgrass: Delay fertilization until active growth returns.
Shrubs and perennials: Wait for visible new growth before fertilizing.
Palms: Resume palm-specific fertilizer only once warm temperatures return and new growth is present.
Slow-release fertilizers are preferred to avoid forcing weak growth.

5. **Palm Recovery: What to Expect in Central Florida**

Palms are particularly vulnerable and often show delayed damage.
A firm spear leaf indicates likely survival.
Do not remove green fronds, even if they are exhibiting some level of damage.
If the spear leaf pulls out easily, it's a good bet that the palm has failed and will require removal.
Queen, Areca, Pygmy Date, Foxtail and Bismarck Palms - may recover slowly over several months.
High-value palms may benefit from preventative fungicide treatments to the bud area following a freeze to suppress pathogen activity.
*Patience is critical! Palms will recover and rebound more slowly than turf grasses and ornamental plants.*

6. **Replacement Decisions: When to Replant**

Plants that commonly fail after severe Florida freezes include:
Croton
Ixora
Tibouchina
Bougainvillea
Copperleaf
Arboricola

Cold-hardy alternatives to consider:
Burfordii Holly
Viburnum
Podocarpus
Ilex Schilling
Ligustrum
Late spring is the appropriate time to determine which plants should be replaced. This allows the plants the ability to exhibit whether they will recover or not.

**Final Thoughts**
Central Florida landscapes are a mix of tropical and temperate plant material, making freeze recovery highly species dependent. With patience, proper timing, and plant-specific care, many landscapes recover successfully. In most cases, the greatest damage occurs not from the freeze itself - but from premature pruning, fertilizing, or removal of the plant material. Smart recovery practices and thoughtful plant selection will help ensure stronger, more resilient landscapes moving forward.