

Are your shrubs burnt or bare?

STAY CALM....DONT PANIC
MARCH 2021

Many landscape plants that usually retain green leaves through winter are showing the effects of the frigid and extended cold spell Tennessee experienced during February 2021. The foliage may be browned, or even dropped, leaving the branches bare. It may appear that the plant is dead, but don't be quick to assume so!

Sometimes panicked gardeners cut back or even remove shrubs that would have flushed new leaves if left alone.

Read on to discover what a gardener's next steps should be!!

WHAT NEXT?

If patience isn't your virtue, here are a couple of ways to see if the plant is alive, or just having an ugly spell.

- The stems should feel cool and pliable.
- Dead twigs will be brittle and warmer to the touch.
- If the bark is thin enough to scratch with your nail, peel back just a bit of it and look for green cambium. Green is good!
- If the bark is too much for your nails, use a knife, or the sharp edge of your pruners. Don't dig deeply, the cambium layer will be found just under the bark.

You may find that some of the stems did die back.

- If so, cut back a little at a time, until you find green where you can stop. The shrub can start there with new growth.

Brown all the way down to the base? All may not be lost.

- Many borderline hardy shrubs will "come back" from the roots.
- Experienced gardeners in the area know this is to be expected during severe winters on their usually hardy gardenias, crapemyrtles, chastetrees, tea olives (*Osmanthus fragrans*) and figs.
- The speed of the recovery may surprise you! Keep in mind that there is already a large established root system that has stored carbohydrates just for this purpose!