

Article Title: Cold Damage-Situation Report 4-18-07

The amount of damage done by the cold weather that swept through Indiana a few weeks ago will depend mostly on the stage of plant growth at the time of the cold. Trees such as honey locust were still in the tight bud stage, whereas species such as crabapples had small, tender leaves exposed. Trees that were more than a year old should be fine, however, growth will likely be reduced this year. For this reason, fertilization should be cut back this year, or even eliminated in fertile soils. Another reason to cut back on fertilization is that fruits (such as crabapples), that use a significant amount of the nutrients provided by fertilizer will not be produced this year if the flowers were killed.

At this point, it is difficult to know the extent of the damage. There may be twig dieback later in the season, especially if we have early hot and/or dry periods. Pruning should be done only after the true extent of the damage is apparent-after several weeks of warm temperatures, when new growth has occurred. Prune dead wood back to healthy tissue, or remove whole shoots that have significant dieback.

Evergreen species were also affected by the cold (see Pic of the Week, 20 Feb 2006). The leaves of many of these species would have been desiccated by the cold temperatures. Watering after the fact will not restore damaged tissue, and at the moment there is plenty of soil moisture for subsequent growth.

Michael V. Mickelbart  
Department of Horticulture & Landscape Architecture  
Purdue University  
625 Agriculture Mall Dr.  
West Lafayette, IN 47907-2010