

### **What Do We Know 16 Days after the Freeze?**

I'm writing this April 23. Our plants look worse than last week. I expect they will look worse next week. It will be wait and see for months. It will be this fall and next year before we really know our losses. There will not be any local straw. Since the wheat was killed, it is being baled for hay or grazed.

In the field and landscape: Foliar burn was noticed first and expected; some tip dieback was then expected. We would be happy if the damage stopped there. In the field, trunk damage began to be detected as early as 7 days after the freeze.

The degree of plant injury seems to be dependant on the stage of growth the plants were in. The more advanced the spring growth, the more severe the damage. The damaged list and degree of damage varies between nurseries and microclimates; with perhaps other factors.

Many Boxwoods, azaleas in landscape, crapemyrtle and hollies have busted bark locally, but also in Franklin Co. and north Alabama. Many producers of seedlings and budded liners do not have an alternative crop or working spouse (another source of income); and their crop is not eligible for crop insurance.

The 2007 Seed Crop on most oaks (except possibly willow and water), tulip popular, and redbud are thought to be lost. Dogwood, birch and maple are unknown at present. We do not know the extent of damage in the stock blocks for cutting wood and budwood.

Nurseries are reluctant to ship rootballs that were dug and inadequately protected on the ball yard or in the field. Same for unprotected containers.

Growers have observed damage to the trunks of Village Green Zelkova, London Planetree, Ginkgo, pears, locust, ash, deciduous magnolias, Dura-Heat, River Birch, KV plum, Foster holly, and Nellie R. Stevens holly.

I will remain concerned about Prunus until July or later. Maples and hornbeam may be okay. But October Glory is usually the first to show unhappiness.

One grower reported his 5-6' River birch dead to the soil; that his first year ginkgo liners appear okay because the transplant process knocked the sap back and his fall planted potted liners of sweetbay, birch and sweet gum appear dead.

A caramel color can be found today under the bark on most plants. Many will survive, but with terminal dieback. How much? July's heat and or drought might be enough to cause another round of dieback. In time the caramel color can diminish or worsen. In the short term, plants will be slow to re-leaf. Some trees may even have some of their new growth wilt only a few weeks after growing it.

Dead terminals can be cut back after you can see where the new growth is. Cut into healthy tissue, making lower cuts as required to find tissue that is alive on all sides, 360 degrees. Wait for new growth, unless you see busted bark, before cutting back.

And of course, I realize young trees may have to be cut all the way back to avoid a crook. Plants with busted bark will likely grow back from the roots. Inspect a few of the plants for

living, healthy, white roots. Check the color of roots in containers. If all white, breath normally.

If off white, check every week or so to see if getting worse or better. As plants attempt to re-flush new foliage, they will have to draw upon already depleted starch reserves. Any additional stress during this growing season drought, insects, diseases, and even fertilizer - could cause trees to be weakened further or possibly die in some situations. Some trees, such as poplar and gum, will push out new foliage more quickly than oak.

Do not fertilize a stressed plant. Fertilizer will only add to the stress. The salt content in fertilizer (measured in EC electrical conductivity) adds another stress to a weakened plant.

Once the crop is actively growing, plants can be fertilized lighter than normal. If fertilized prior to the freeze, no need to fertilize again until mid to late June.

If you have Crop Insurance, contact them. Contact the Farm Service Agency if you do not have Crop Ins. Document damage with good photos or video, with some close-ups. Keep all receipts. I understand no grants or free money are likely. The most that might be possible would be a low interest loan.

No one can tell today with any certainty which plants will live, die or lay around waiting. Unless the bark is busted. It will be this fall and next year before we really know our losses.

We are not alone; nurseries in Ala, Tenn, Ky, Mich, Texas, Neb, Okla, Iowa, Miss, NC, SC, Ark and Ohio all have significant damage.

Could there be a silver lining in all of this loss? The reduction of inventory in the Mid-South and a few other states will allow producers the opportunity to raise prices. If dogwood first year buds are damaged, the seedlings and the seed crop diminished on the trees, then 3 years of dogwood production may be removed from inventory.

17 year Cicada is expected to revisit Tarlton, Irving College, Hills Creek and parts of Jacksboro in 2008. If you had them 16 years ago, in 1991, then look out. I do not know if crop insurance will cover their damage for sure. We lost a years growth and did a lot of spraying. Might plant fewer tree liners this fall or next spring.

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