

Maintenance practices to minimize the existing cold damage.

By Patricia Porchey

Don't

- Prune those ugly brown leaves and branches. If you scratch the bark, you will usually find it is still green which means it will leaf out again as soon as the weather turns warm.
- Prune those ugly brown leaves and branches. Those unattractive leaves are actually providing a protective covering for the lower parts of the plant should we receive another cold blast.
- Prune those terminal branches that are no longer viable. Pruning will encourage new flushes of growth that will be the most vulnerable part of the plant should we encounter another cold spell. Pruning would result in even more cold damage to that plant.
- Prune those brown fronds on your palms. If there is still green on part of the leaf, that leaf is still making energy for the plant.
- Prune those brown fronds on your palms. Unlike our woody plants that have their crown underground, growth on a palm initiates from the bud. Exposing the bud to more cold air, especially for the more cold-sensitive palms, increases the likelihood of their death.
- Water the grass more than it needs. In the winter when the grass goes into dormancy, its water needs are reduced.
- Mow that brown lawn. If you look under the topmost layer, you will still see green growth. That top layer is protecting the lower leaves. Wait to mow until you see enough green growth to warrant it.
- Fertilize that brown lawn. It is either in a dormant or slow-growth stage now. It needs the warmth of spring to warm the soil and encourage more growth. Fertilize at the end of February.
- Reseed with Bahia or Bermuda grass seed now. Those grass seeds need the warm soil of late March or early April to germinate. However, you can plant ryegrass seed for a temporary green until your lawn recovers. Refer to this UF fact sheet for more information <http://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/ep098>.
- Worry about aesthetics. Time will release the lush growth and flowers that we've come to expect in Florida.