

Editorial: Winter plant damage ... experts offer best advice for gardeners, consumers

Staff Reports

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Thank goodness — once again — for the University of Florida Collier County Extension Service.

Plant experts there, including longtime Daily News contributing writer Doug Caldwell, serve as resources to those of us who like plants but really don't know how they work or don't always know how to treat them with the proper respect.

This time Caldwell and his fellow researchers come forward with news about the browning that the community is noticing on various plants, including palms.

That is due, the experts say, to our prolonged frigid winter temperatures.

In many cases it's a delayed reaction, as the damage is just now coming to light.

It's another example of Florida's extremes — in temperatures, rainfall, storms and even wild animals.

It's also an example of something else. As Caldwell puts it, "Typical horticulture: Just when you thought you knew what would happen, it doesn't always go that way."

Plus, it's an example of something that it is too late to fix. What's done is done, Caldwell writes. Be patient with plants trying to recover, and know when a plant is a goner.

He goes on to offer a valuable consumer protection tip: Beware salespeople offering magic-bullet cures of fertilizers and injections for palms. The right fertilizers applied in advance of the freeze seem to be producing some benefits, he writes, but not now.

For more information, e-mail Caldwell at dougbug@ufl.edu or phone 353-4244, ext. 203.

To him and the rest of the Extension Service crew, keep up the good work — and good tips for our plants and pocketbooks.



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