

Dieback on Shrubs and Trees

Last fall we had an early and severe cold snap that caught many of our deciduous trees and shrubs before they had the chance to harden off properly. This resulted in many of our woody plants retaining their leaves, as an indicator of this problem. As a result of this early freeze, and temperature fluctuations in early spring, many deciduous trees and shrubs appear to be dead. Deciduous trees should be given time to struggle through and recover. Many have secondary buds that are formed for just such an event, and may yet leaf out. Use a thumbnail to shallowly scrape into the cambium of the branch - if it is green, the branch is alive and needs to be given time to recover. Another test is the suppleness of the branch. Traditionally we recommend folks give their trees until at least the 4th of July to recover from such a winter, and sometimes even longer if the branches still appear to be alive.



Photo 1: Weigela with winter damage. Note retained 2019 leaves. New leaves are small and weak, but still being produced. Photo: Cheryl Moore-Gough.



Photo 2: Weigela has new growth at the base of the canes. Photo: Cheryl Moore-Gough

Sincerely,

Cheryl Moore-Gough, MSU Horticulture Specialist