

Late Spring Cold and Frost Damage

June 3rd, 2021



In Montana, it is not uncommon to have late spring cold snaps after things have started to produce new growth in the early spring. This can damage newly emerged leaves, shoots, and flowers especially when temperatures dip to the mid-high 20s. This damage is usually noticeable a few days to a week after the freezing temperatures as wilting and browning of leaves and needles, in addition to potential defoliation of severely damaged growth.

With the cold snap that occurred in the last couple of weeks of May, along with the snow that accompanied it, Montanans are now seeing some of the resulting damage to their trees, shrubs, and early season annuals.

Although the damage can look significant and alarming, most of the discoloration that we are seeing in the state is largely aesthetic, and new growth has already started to resume. Although some of these plants may have stunted growth in the early part of the growing season, most will recover when appropriately cared for, since late winter cold snaps rarely have lasting impacts on healthy trees and shrubs.



To learn more about environmental damage to trees and shrubs, visit the following links:
<https://extension.colostate.edu/topic-areas/yard-garden/environmental-disorders-of-woody-plants-2-932/>
<https://hgic.clemson.edu/factsheet/cold-damage/>

Contact your local extension office for information on caring for your trees and shrubs.

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