



Springtime after a hard winter

Many of us have been reminded this spring of how hard the winter was – as if anyone had forgotten! Perennials, shrubs and trees have all been slow to leaf out, bloom, or you might still be waiting for signs of life. Unfortunately, you should have seen *something* by now. June 1st is an easy date to remember for answering the question of ‘is it dead or alive?’ For example, out of my five roses, three have the beginnings of little shoots. The other two have dry, brown stems and nothing else. If that’s the case with some of your ornamentals, it’s time we both replace the dead with something living! It’s perfectly fine for some things to be slow, or sparse in their growth; they did after all go through a very tough winter. Recovery may be slow, or they might not fully recover and need to be replaced as well.

If you have plants that are grafted, such as tea roses, or some grapes, you may experience top dieback. For instance, in grafted roses, two different types of roses are grafted together. The bottom rose is known as the rootstock. The top rose that produces the blooms is called the scion. If the scion part has died, you might get some sprouting from the rootstock, which is not what you want. If that’s the case, it’s time to tear that one out, and purchase a new plant.

On brambles such as raspberry and blackberries, many of the popular varieties grown here produce fruits on two year-old canes. Unfortunately, many of these berry plants had dieback to the ground and will have to produce all new canes. In this case, there won’t be fruits for two years, as the plant recovers and produces the necessary vegetative growth this year before it can begin to fruit the year after.

The late frosts we had a couple weeks ago might also be affecting some of your plants. Things like potatoes and tomatoes that were already in the ground may have been nipped back, but should grow out of it just fine. Other things, like the flowers on a strawberry plant, may have been killed. If any part of a flower is black, or shriveled, it’s dead, and won’t produce fruit. That being said, if the plant itself is still fine, there will be new flowers developing in the near future, but you may have to wait a little longer for any sort of harvest.

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