

Stonegate Email News of January 22, 2007

Cold . . . enough! Driving around Stonegate at 11AM, we saw enormous amounts of frost still clinging to lawns and cars – and frost damaged plants everywhere. After talking with our staff experts and surfing the internet for more information, here's what you should know:

- Keep off the grass! Walking on frosted grass will kill it.
- Those heavily damaged plants will likely come back. Your ficus nitida and jacaranda trees, bougainvillea, and lantana are probably going to look terrible for a while. The bougainvillea and lantana will need cutting back – but *not now!* The damaged ficus and jacaranda trees will defoliate altogether before coming back this spring.
- Be patient. Don't even think about getting your trees and plants pruned or cut back right away. Don't get the clippers out until mid-February – or whenever there is no longer any risk of frost.
- If you're worried, or your house is in a particularly frost-prone location, there are things you can buy at the garden center that will help. All the experts advocate using a cover to protect from frost – an old blanket over the begonias, or a special frost cover from the nursery. It's important to pull the cover during the day, since it can cause the ground underneath to heat up quite a lot. That fools the plant into doing exactly the wrong thing. There are even sprays which inhibit ice formation on the leaves. Frost season can extend into March. So while we hope the worst is over, it may very well not be.
- The experts advocate watering during the day. You might think that adding more water to the soil would just increase frost problems, but the garden wizards say no. Make sure your plants aren't dehydrated during these cold months.
- When you do trim the trees adjacent to the sidewalk, remember that Stonegate requires that you provide 8' of headroom above the sidewalk.

For more information, try these links:

<http://www.cals.arizona.edu/pubs/garden/az1002.pdf>

http://www.artistic-arborist.com/nov_2003.htm

<http://communitygardensoftucson.org/blog/?p=17>

Lights . . . off! Since you won't be out pruning those poor, damaged plants this weekend, perhaps you could pull down the holiday lights and decorations. Next week we start sending letters.