



PHOTO BY William M. Johnson

Many cold sensitive landscape shrubs, such as Esperanza or Tecoma Stans (pictured) have initiated new growth at the base of dead trunks. Such shrubs can be pruned back to new growth. Be sure to be prepared to cover the new growth with a sheet or blanket in the event another cold snap occurs as new growth is particularly sensitive to cold temperatures.



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The 26th Galveston Home and Garden Show was recently held at the Galveston Island Convention Center. Twenty-four Master Gardener volunteers with the Galveston County AgriLife Extension Office were available to provide information to visitors. Master Gardeners distributed publications and plenty of visitors came by to ask plenty of gardening questions. Appreciation is also extended to Stewart Title who

sponsored our booth and made it possible for our Master Gardener volunteers to participate in the Home & Garden Show. The next time you meet a Master Gardener, please give them a thank you for their public service. The following is a sampling of the questions we received:
Question: I have followed your advice to hold off any major pruning of freeze-damaged shrubs and per-

ennials? Can I prune them back now?

Answer: Before answering, I should note that the above question, or variations of said question, was the most asked question I had to address during this year's Home & Garden Show. In my Green Thumb column printed February 5, I advised gardeners to wait a while before pruning back freeze-damaged plants.

One gardener relayed a



conversation she had with her husband as he was preparing to practice major pruning to their home landscape a few days after reading my February 5 column.

She said she explained to her husband that it was not time to do such pruning because "Dr. Johnson warned against doing so." She conveyed that her husband replied that "You mean that all the other neighbors that are pruning their landscapes on this beautiful day are wrong and Dr. Johnson is right?" She responded yes and the pruning mission was put off!

So, yes it would be far safer for the health and performance of landscape shrubs to delay pruning by a few weeks when a cold snap occurs in February.

Waiting a few weeks or so to give the plants time to seal off damaged tissue and prepare for new growth is worth denying the understandable urge to prune early. Pruning too soon also signals plants to send out tender new growth, which would be all the more vulnerable if subsequent cold temperatures occur.

Pruning away the dead portions too soon after a cold snap exposes buds that may still be alive. And another frosty morning could wipe out those survivors. So, I have recommended keeping the shears in the garage and let the dead portions of the plants protect the understory.

The threat of another severe cold snap has considerably lessened. It would be satisfactory to now prune landscape shrubs and perennials that sustained damage from cold weather. I am still holding back on pruning my banana trees that sustained a moderate amount of damage as I know the browned leaves

still provide some protection from chilly temperatures. In fact, several of the taller banana trees pushed out new leaf growth but those leaves were also damaged by cold temperatures that occurred a couple of weeks ago.

As I was surveying the shrubs at my office in Carbide Park, I noticed that several Esperanza (also known as Yellow Bells and Tecoma Stans) have produced new growth at the base of plants. If your cold sensitive shrubs have started to put out new growth at the base, go ahead and prune back the old top growth. Be sure to be prepared to cover the new growth with a sheet or blanket as such new growth is particularly sensitive to cold temperatures.

Question: How can I attract beneficial insects to my landscape?

Answer: We had an insect display box containing a variety of insects collected in the county including several beneficial insects which generated considerable interest and lots of questions, including the one above.

The use of beneficial insects to help manage their pest relatives has been a mainstay among gardeners for a very long time. There are a number of excellent advantages to this method of insect pest control. Utilizing beneficial insects requires a minimum of effort by the gardener and helps reduce the incidence of insect pests with resistance to insecticides.

Gardeners can attract and keep our natural friends in their home landscape and gardens by following a few recommendations, many of which is just good gardening sense that we use anyway. One way to conserve beneficials is by avoiding

indiscriminate use of insecticides. While they play an important role in pest control, indiscriminate and improper use of insecticides can also pose hazards to ourselves and our environment. For more information on how to attract and maintain beneficial insects, visit my website

(<http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/galveston/>)

and click on the link entitled "Beneficials in the Gardens."

Question: My broccoli plants have produced a bountiful display of yellow flowers. Why did this happen?

Answer: Broccoli is a cool season vegetable grown as a fall or winter crop in local gardens. However, we have had some unusually warm days and unusually cool days over the past few weeks and the warm days stimulated broccoli plants to set flowers. That also means that you missed a portion of your harvest!