

## GARDENING

# How to restore your post-freeze plants this spring

By John Green

TEXAS CERTIFIED MASTER GARDENER

While walking around the yard, I noted what appears to be a vast, brown, lifeless landscape — almost devoid of greenery, but for sporadic drifts of weeds that appear to be overtaking some lawn areas (lucky me)! Today's gardening topic should be titled: The Waiting Game, an attribute this gardener struggles with daily!

Readers, some of you understand that plant dormancy is an integral part of the plants' growth cycle for some trees, shrubs and perennials, lending their appearance to be brown and slumped over. Often, the brown leaves fall away once new sprouts begin growing in the spring, or leaves develop slightly past the area where leaves grew previously. Allow the eyesore to remain until all winter (last freeze) is behind us. So, don't begin pruning just yet! My recommendation is to wait until spring when new growth begins (around mid-March or later). This waiting period is difficult for most gardeners (me included), since we want our gardens to look their absolute best. But choosing not to wait can further damage plants if we experience another cold snap. And they might not survive your overzealous gardening technique. The waiting period ensures you don't remove plants thinking they are dead, when they simply remain in dormancy.

## Dead or alive



Kim Brent/The Enterprise

**Leslie Pierce and fellow gardeners at Shangri La in Orange deadhead a bed of violas and other plants in a landscaped bed, removing the damaged stems and flowers in the wake of last week's arctic storm. The usual green color and first blossoms found throughout the grounds was turned into a dry and wilted brown.**

The simplest way to determine if a plant is dead or alive is by slightly scratching the bark, since the growth layer immediately below will be green if it's alive. Otherwise, the plant succumbed to winter temperatures or something else, such as too much moisture. This is a guide for pruning damaged material from plants — remove the damaged portion of the plant allowing the green material layer to remain. There are instances where some plants look okay but then begin to brown or appear slimy and silvery once spring arrives. Unfortunately, the root system was extensively damaged during the winter months from the cold weather or too much

rainfall.

## Grasses, perennials, ferns and tropicals

Ornamental grasses and perennials' growth cycle includes a dormancy period, where the plants die back to the ground. So, don't be overly concerned if they appear dead. I'd suggest removing the dead portions of the plants 2- or 3-inches above the ground. Once warmer weather returns, new growth will appear. Ferns damaged by the cold such as Boston, sword, leather leaf, holly, asparagus and others should be cut to the ground before new fronds appear in the spring. Remove damaged foliage from bird of paradise plants, taking the leaf blade and stem.

These plants most likely survived and will recover, but summer flowering might be sparse.

Tropicals that produce bulbs, rhizomes or fleshy, below-ground roots will be okay. Remove winter-burned foliage from ginger, cannas, agapanthus, amaryllis, crinum, spider lilies and elephant ears to the ground and add mulch. Hibiscus and other woody tropicals, such as Brugmansia; tibouchina; bougainvillea; croton; and ixora most likely have damage (mine certainly do). Once new growth appears, prune plants, as this allows you to see what is alive and what is not. If you're impatient, scratch the bark starting at the top of the plant and work downward — brown

means tissue is dead, green issue is still alive. Then cut back to this point.

## Roses, hydrangeas, camellias and azaleas

Prune roses severely in late February or early March. Hydrangeas should never have more than 50% of the old growth removed, since severe pruning promotes vegetative growth while slowing flower development. Prune varieties that bloom on old wood once flowers fade. Newer varieties may bloom on either new growth, or a mixture of new and old growth, allowing for a more flexible pruning window. Some camellia and azalea buds may have frozen and unfortunately, the plants may not

flower. Do not prune until after their typical bloom time, salvaging any flowers that may make it through winter.

## Citrus trees

Citrus does not appreciate cold temperatures. Lemons and limes are the more likely to show damage or die, though even if all leaves are dropped, they may still be alive. Leaves that have turned brown but remain attached indicate major branch damage. However, don't do anything to citrus trees now. Instead wait until new growth begins in spring. If new sprouts appear from the base of the trunk (below the graft union), the desirable citrus is lost. Remove and replace the tree. If new growth appears above the graft union, prune back to the areas that are sprouting. It is not uncommon for growing shoots to collapse and die. If so, you can remove them.

Keep in mind that we live in hardiness zone 9, which is not a tropical region, and we will continue experiencing severe cold weather patterns as our climate is changing. Review the plants in your landscape and consider where you use tender tropical plants. As gardeners, we can easily get carried away with the use of these wonderful plants — then witness extensive damage or loss during hard freezes.

Let's go out and grow ourselves a greener, more sustainable world, one plant at a time! Please continue sending comments and asking questions thru email to: jon-green57@gmail.com.

## We don't have to be perfect for God to show up

By Sarah Herod  
CONTRIBUTOR

Sometimes it's not until you take one little step of faith that God comes through. Not always — sometimes you may pray and God immediately answers. But other times, you may exhaust your strength trying to hear from God, and it's the moment you take your first step forward in faith that you finally hear His still-small voice.

There's a saying I've heard often, "Do it scared." It speaks to doing something you know you want to or should do, even if it terrifies you. There are many instances in the Bible where someone does something scared, whether God's voice was physically present to lead the way or not.

Isaiah 41:10 speaks to this — it says "fear not" which, admittedly, can feel a little depressing at times. I know when I am feeling anxious and worried and scared, the last thing I want someone to tell me is "stop being so afraid." But God knows us, and He knows our thoughts and our feelings and how valid those are, and the verse doesn't stop there.

He tells us to "fear not" BECAUSE He is with us. He continues and says "be not dismayed" BECAUSE He is our God. And if that's not enough (because on my most anxious of days, it might not be enough for me), He promises us even more. He states that He will strengthen you, He will help you and He

will uphold you.

I think most people think that the removal of fear has to come first. That the moment we feel afraid, the need to rein it in so that God will do His work. But that's not what it says. Between the "fear not" and the "I am with you" is the word "for" — our God is with us before we feel the fear, before we face the fear and before we ever make a decision to step out in faith.

I think of the men who were thrown in the fiery furnace for not bowing down to a man-made idol. Whether it's stated or not, you know they had to have been terrified. Maybe they did have a God-given, beyond understanding peace about them. But I still choose to believe that their human selves were feeling afraid as they walked into the fire. God did not speak before they took a step to say, "I will be with you in there." He simply showed up as the fourth man in that fire, when those three men walked inside.

God's sovereignty and His faithfulness have absolutely nothing to do with us. Thank goodness, right? We don't have to get it right for Him to be who He says He is. But the more we step out, even scared, the more chances He has to prove Himself faithful to us. And so the next time you need to step out in faith, maybe you're doing it not-quite-so scared. Fear and faith can, indeed, be in both your hands as you take that step.

## New Beaumont art museum exhibit spotlights local attorney

By Andy Coughlan  
CONTRIBUTOR

Have you ever had the feeling you're being watched? Visitors to the Art Museum of Southeast Texas will find themselves surrounded by hundreds of prying eyes as they eat their lunch. The museum's latest Café Arts exhibition, "Jacqueline Bley Ryall: Abstract Connections," features whimsical, colorful paintings crowded with faces seemingly vying for one's attention.

The Café Arts series shines a spotlight on local artists, many of whom, as in this case, are exhibiting a complete show for the first time. Ryall is an attorney for the Provost Umphrey Law Firm, where she does union arbitrations.

"When I prepare for my arbitrations, I'm very detail oriented," she said. "I think that's just part of my personality."

That attention to detail is evident in her work. Many of the pieces are packed with peering faces, each with their own personality. The features are loosely drawn, with noses and eyes that seem to be attached at random, as if the images are the result of a marathon doodling session.

The large acrylic painting, "Jury Duty," has more than 60 faces that encompass a range of emotions. Some look happy, some look angry, some look bored. In short, it's a representative jury pool. The image is complex mélange of shapes and colors that is vibrant and enticing. We find ourselves drawn to examine the details.

Ryall cites Jackson Pollock, Salvador Dali



Andy Coughlan/The Enterprise

**The Art Museum of Southeast Texas' latest Café Arts exhibition, "Jacqueline Bley Ryall: Abstract Connections" is on display through April 28.**

and M.C. Escher among her influences, and it is interested to examine the works and see where she has drawn from these disparate sources to create a unique amalgam of styles.

At first glance, "Swarm" would appear to draw most on Pollock's Abstract-Expressionism. From a distance, it appears to be textured blue splotches with random additions of yellow. But closer inspection finds that far from being purely abstract, the image is mass of faces. We have a birds-eye view and one can imagine a crowded pool on a busy summer day. The phrase "teeming mass of humanity" comes to mind.

"Tango" is a joyous collection of oranges, reds and yellows. Ryall barely suggests the outline of the heads, meaning each face slides into the other. We do not see where one ends and another begins. Given the sensuous nature of the titular dance, this crowded dance floor

is a delight.

Ryall said she had thought about art school when she was young, but chose nursing and, later, law school instead. It was not until her children went away to college that she returned to art, inspired by YouTube videos.

During the COVID-19 lockdown, her children returned home. As she worked from home on Zoom, Ryall's daughter kept getting compliments on the painting in the background, which inspired Ryall to continue to paint on a regular basis, she said.

The paintings have a definite "outsider" or "folk" art quality, similar to Jean DuBuffet's later works and the sense of playfulness is attractive. "Roundabout" is a pastel-colored treat with faces swirling around, forcing one to move from one to another. There is a voyeuristic element at play.

Ryall said she loves bright and colorful paintings and said she hopes

her work will make viewers happy. This may be her debut, but on the evidence of this show, it won't be her last.

"Jacqueline Bley Ryall: Abstract Connections" is on display through April 28. AMSET is located at 500 Main St. in Beaumont. For more, visit amset.org.

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