

Did the Extreme Cold Hurt This Year's Fruit Crop?

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Normally we are concerned with cold damage to fruit buds as they break dormancy in the spring. However, this year, people are concerned that the extreme cold temperatures last week may have damaged their fruit plants. Though most fruit plants should have come through the cold temperatures without significant damage, fruit buds or fruit canes are more sensitive. For example, thornless blackberry canes may have been killed to the ground. However, the thornless blackberry plant is likely fine and will put up new growth this summer. Raspberries and thorned blackberry fruiting canes may have survived but it will be a wait and see proposition.

What about tree fruit? The trees are likely fine but fruit buds may have been affected. Usually we start losing the fruiting buds of peaches and nectarines when the temperature drops to 10 degrees F below zero. Cherry buds are more hardy and will often withstand temperatures down to -15F. Apple and pear are even more hardy and often escape damage until the temperature reaches -25 to -30F. However, there is significant variability among different varieties or even different localities and you may receive damage at temperatures less severe than those mentioned. Also, you may not find damage even though temperatures dropped below those listed. For more information, please contact the local K-State Research and Extension Office.

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