

# Citrus SOS

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All of us citrus tree lovers are concerned about the damage recent record-low temperatures may have caused our trees.

In the past, milder winters allowed citrus trees to grow further and further north. No one was surprised to see a Meyer lemon or even a grapefruit tree producing beautiful fruit in the northern part of our city.

This winter, however, we were all shocked to see the effects of record-breaking cold weather. Overnight, we woke up to see that our beautiful orange trees were not the same ones we saw just two months ago.

Recovery of our beloved citrus trees hinges on several factors.

**Variety:** Kumquat (*Citrus japonica*) and mandarin (*Citrus reticulata*) have a better chance of survival than Mexican lime (*Citrus x aurantifolia*) or Meyer lemon (*Citrus x meyeri*).

**Size or age:** Adult or mature trees can better cope with inclement weather than younger trees since the roots are fully developed.

## **Other equally important factors include:**

- Duration the tree was exposed to freezing temperatures.
- Rate the temperature decreased (gradual or rapid).
- If soil around the tree was covered with vegetation.
- Health of the tree prior to the freeze.
- If the tree kept its fruit when temperatures dropped.

The first symptom to look for is a change in their leaves. They'll begin to change color and wrinkle before gradually beginning to drop. But falling leaves aren't necessarily cause for concern as it could also be a sign that the tree's natural defense system is working. If the branches don't release their leaves, the damage could be more severe.

It's important not to get ahead of ourselves. Only time will tell how much care our trees will need. During the spring and even into summer, we'll be able to see in more detail what branches were affected and whether our trees will fully recover. So it's important to not start pruning trees until we know the depth of the damage.