Benton County Master Gardener Problem Diagnosis Scenario #51
(Frost damage on shrubs and trees)

**Problem:** My shrub/tree looks really bad this spring. Parts of it look dead, while other parts look OK. Will it live?

**Description:** Leaves appear water-soaked, shriveled, or dead-appearing brown or black, or may have a “scorched” appearance. Split bark. Dead buds, twigs or branches. Failure to leaf out in spring.

**Questions and Answers:**
**Question:** Is the tree/shrub an evergreen or deciduous?
**Answer:** Evergreen.

**Question:** What does the damage look like?
**Answer:** Some whole branches are black and dead. Others have some green, or some of the leaves/needles are kind of scorched looking, part black and part green.

**Question:** Are some parts leafing out and growing normally?
**Answer:** Yes.

**Question:** Do any other plants show this type of damage?
**Answer:** Some, but this one is the worst.

**Question:** Is it growing in an exposed area?
**Answer:** Yes, it is away from the house and not under any trees.

**Reference(s)**
Winter Injury of Landscape Plants in the Pacific Northwest.
http://pnwhandbooks.org/plantdisease/pathogen-articles/nonpathogenic-phenomena/winter-injury-landscape-plants-pacific-northwest

“Eight ways to protect your garden from ice and cold”
http://extension.oregonstate.edu/gardening/node/2311

**Diagnosis:** Sub-freezing temperatures have damaged or killed the most exposed parts of the plant.

**Recommendations:** Check if a branch is alive by scraping away a small bit of bark. If there is green underneath it is alive and will probably leaf out normally. If it is all black or brown it is dead, and should be pruned out.

Don’t rush to prune the plant back in spring. Once it has started growing well, you will more easily be able to see what is dead and what is alive.
#51 Frost Damage