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Will our winter storms damage your fruit tree?

Those with fruit trees may be wondering if our recent cold snaps and snow storms have harmed their fruit trees. Fortunately, our fruit trees are still in their dormancy period and our weather has likely not caused any damage.

When trees go into dormancy, they become cold hardy. They undergo various physiological changes that prevent low temperatures from causing damage. The trees slow down their growth, and develop winter buds on their twigs, which are a hard-shell coating that protects living tissue underneath from the cold. The tree also allows water to exit its tissue cells, so that cells do not freeze and rupture. This is what causes the sap in trees to become thick and sugary during the winter – which is why we harvest maple syrup in the winter!

This does not mean that fruit trees are immune to cold weather all the time. These protections from the cold are only present when the tree is dormant. When spring comes, and the trees get more sunlight and warmer weather, they start to undo these changes that prevent cold damage. If there is a late frost or cold snap, they may not be prepared for the cold and suffer branch die back. Fruit trees that are not properly pruned are also at a higher chance of suffering frost damage.

While our recent weather may have caused us to retreat into our warm homes, the odds are that your fruit trees were able to endure the cold without any damage. If you have concerns about your trees cold-hardiness, or how to care for your trees, feel free to reach out to our office for more guidance.