



Text and photo courtesy of Encore® Azaleas.

How to Care for Winter-Damaged Azaleas

Winter's chill left many azaleas across the country looking worse for wear. If your azaleas show signs of brown foliage, defoliation, or damaged flower buds, don't worry—there's hope! With the right care and patience, your azaleas can bounce back beautifully. Here are some timely tips from the folks at Encore® Azaleas.

- **When to Prune Winter Damage?**

While it's tempting to reach for the pruners, hold off for now. Here's why.

~ **Wait for New Growth:** Once buds open or new foliage emerges, you'll clearly see which parts of the plant are living and which aren't. Pruning too soon risks cutting away tissues that could recover naturally.

~ **Dead or Alive?** Damaged leaves often drop on their own, and fresh growth may appear on the lower stems of the plant. Remove dead stems by cutting back to a healthy bud or branch, but wait until the plant fully awakens.

~ **Protect the Flowers:** Pruning too early may remove flower buds that survived the winter. Here's what to keep in mind.

~ **Healthy Buds:** Some buds may look damaged but will still open. Be patient!

- **Missed Spring Blooms?** Don't worry. Encore® Azaleas rebloom on new growth in summer and fall, so you can still enjoy their beauty later in the season.

- **Consider Cold-Hardy Varieties:**

If you're replacing damaged plants, opt for cold-hardy Encore® Azaleas. Many are hardy to USDA Zone 6, tolerating temperatures as low as -10°F. Varieties like 'Autumn Fire', 'Autumn Lily', and 'Autumn Amethyst' offer incredible resilience along with vibrant blooms.

- **Tips for Future Winter Protection:**

Prepare your azaleas for next winter with these tips:

~ **Mulch in Fall:** Add 3–4 inches of pine straw or bark to insulate roots.

~ **Water Before Freezes:** Moist soil retains heat better than dry soil and helps protect shallow azalea roots.

~ **Cold Care:** Ensure plants are well-hydrated by thoroughly watering them as freezing temperatures approach.

To find out more azalea care tips, visit the Encore® Azaleas website at <https://encoreazalea.com/> or visit *The Azalean* archives at the ASA website.