



winter



This is the time of years our neighbors complain about the deer antlers in our front yard...

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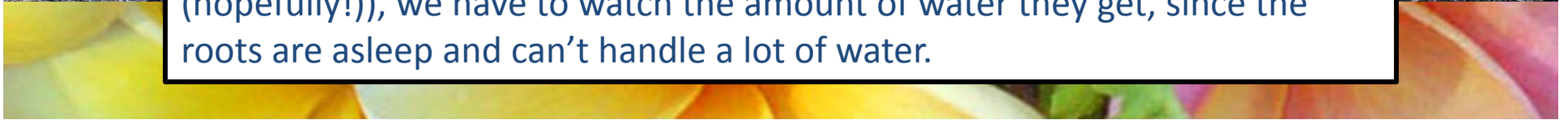
Dormancy



It's important to understand what happens in dormancy...



Since our temperate/Mediterranean climate is the opposite (wet winters (hopefully!)), we have to watch the amount of water they get, since the roots are asleep and can't handle a lot of water.



Light or heat?

A photograph of a sunset over a body of water. The sun is a large, bright yellow and orange orb in the upper right quadrant. The sky is a gradient of orange and brown. In the foreground, there are dark, silhouetted mangrove plants with long, thin stems and small leaves. The water is a dark, textured surface.

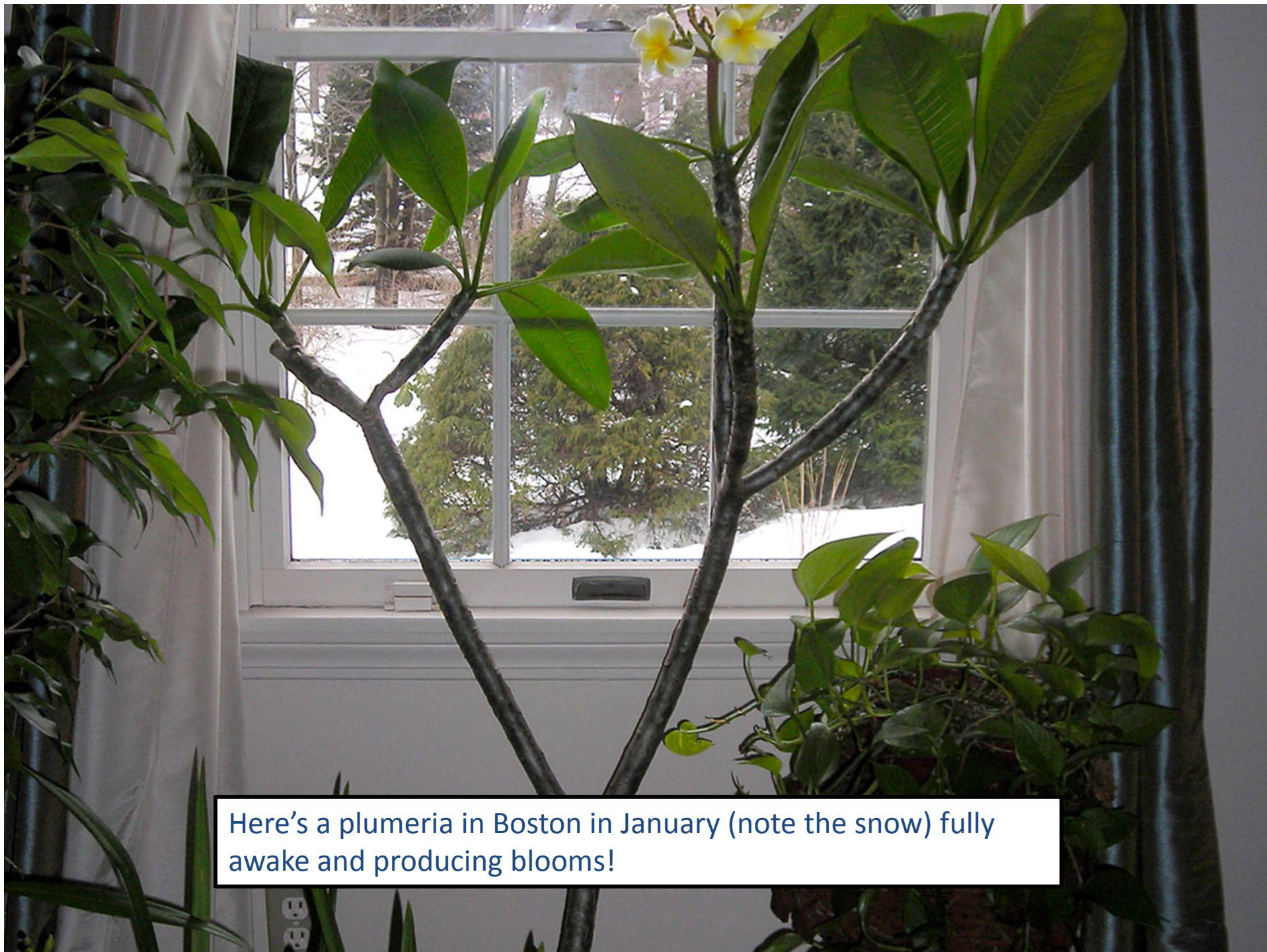
So what “tells” our plumerias to go dormant. In tropical climates, it’s all about the amount of sunlight in a day (photo period). As that decreases, the plants go to sleep. As it increases in the spring, they wake up.



However, in our temperate climate, the plants have apparently adapted by using *both* light and temperature cues to go dormant. We know this based on much evidence; for instance the winter of 2014 was so mild, we saw our plants coming out of dormancy up to 2 months early, based only on higher-than-average low temps – even with less daylight.



Can you beat dormancy? YES! Many folks – especially in the Midwest – keep their plants alive with no negative effects over winter with lights that emulate summer daylight hours and with heat.



Here's a plumeria in Boston in January (note the snow) fully awake and producing blooms!

A photograph of several plumeria plants in a garden. The plants have thick, woody stems and large, dark green leaves. Many of the leaves are brown and withered, indicating damage from frost or freeze. The ground is covered with dry leaves and mulch. The background shows a dirt path and some other plants.

Frost/Freeze

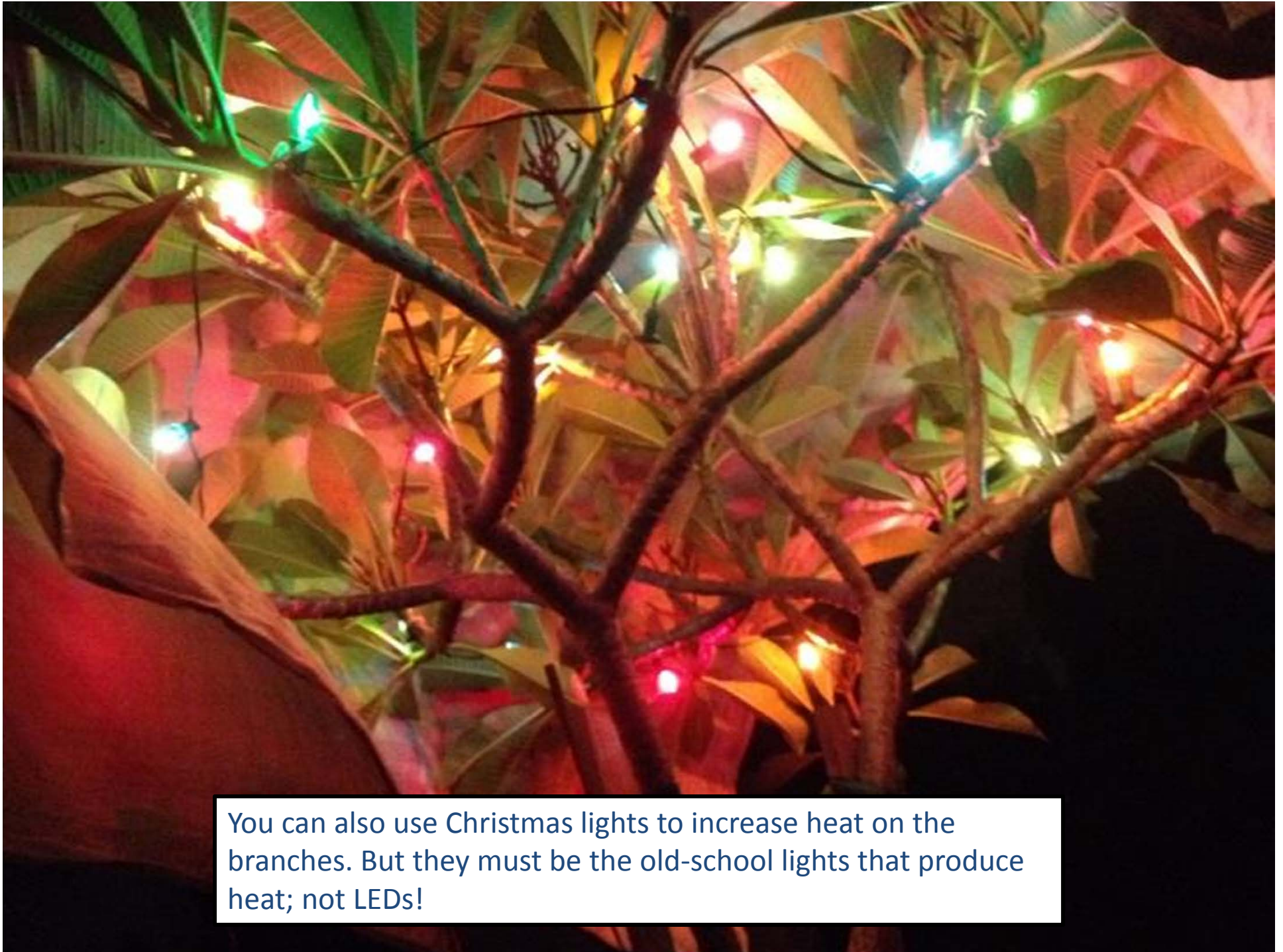
Frost & freeze is the enemy of plumerias. So we need to protect them.



Any kind of shelter can be used: Greenhouse, under a tree, eaves, garage, covered patio. This keep frost from settling on the branches, which will most likely cause rot.



No, these aren't kids dressed up as ghosts for Halloween. These are in-ground plants covered with old sheets and blankets (from thrift stores) to keep frost from settling on the branches. Try to get the cover all the way to the ground to capture heat escaping the ground and plant at night to warm the branches.



You can also use Christmas lights to increase heat on the branches. But they must be the old-school lights that produce heat; not LEDs!



And they look SO cool...



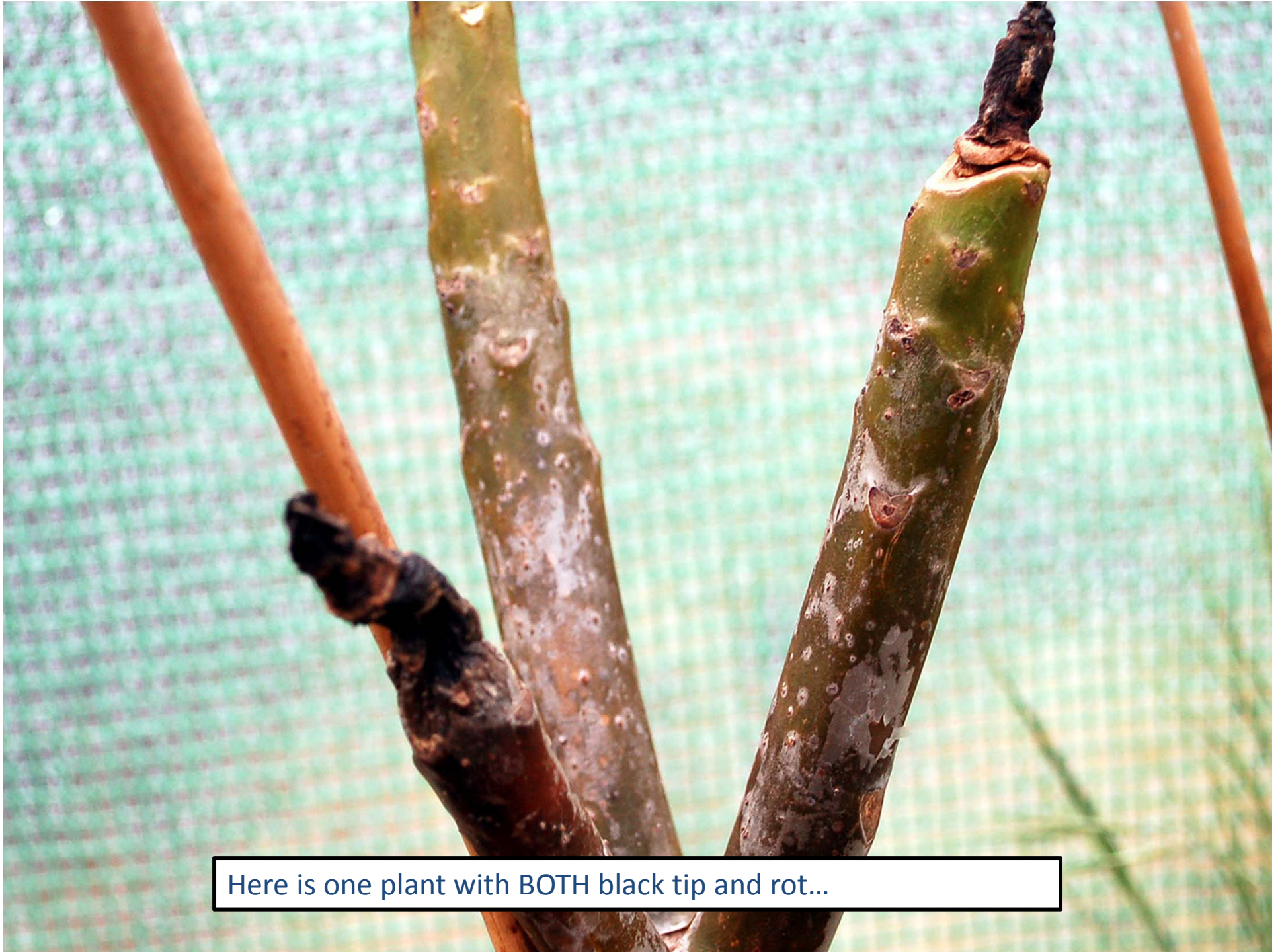
Older plants

I have found that older plants (older than 5-6 years) generally do not need to be covered in winter. Their roots are so well-established they survive our temps in the high 20's with no damage. (There are some varieties that will not survive that, so I just don't grow them in the ground. Survival of the fittest!)

Black tip/rot

It's important to know the difference...





Here is one plant with BOTH black tip and rot...



Black tip

Black tip kills the tip of the branch, but does not travel down the branch. Note how the damaged area is hard.



After a while, it will naturally fall off or you can gently break it off...

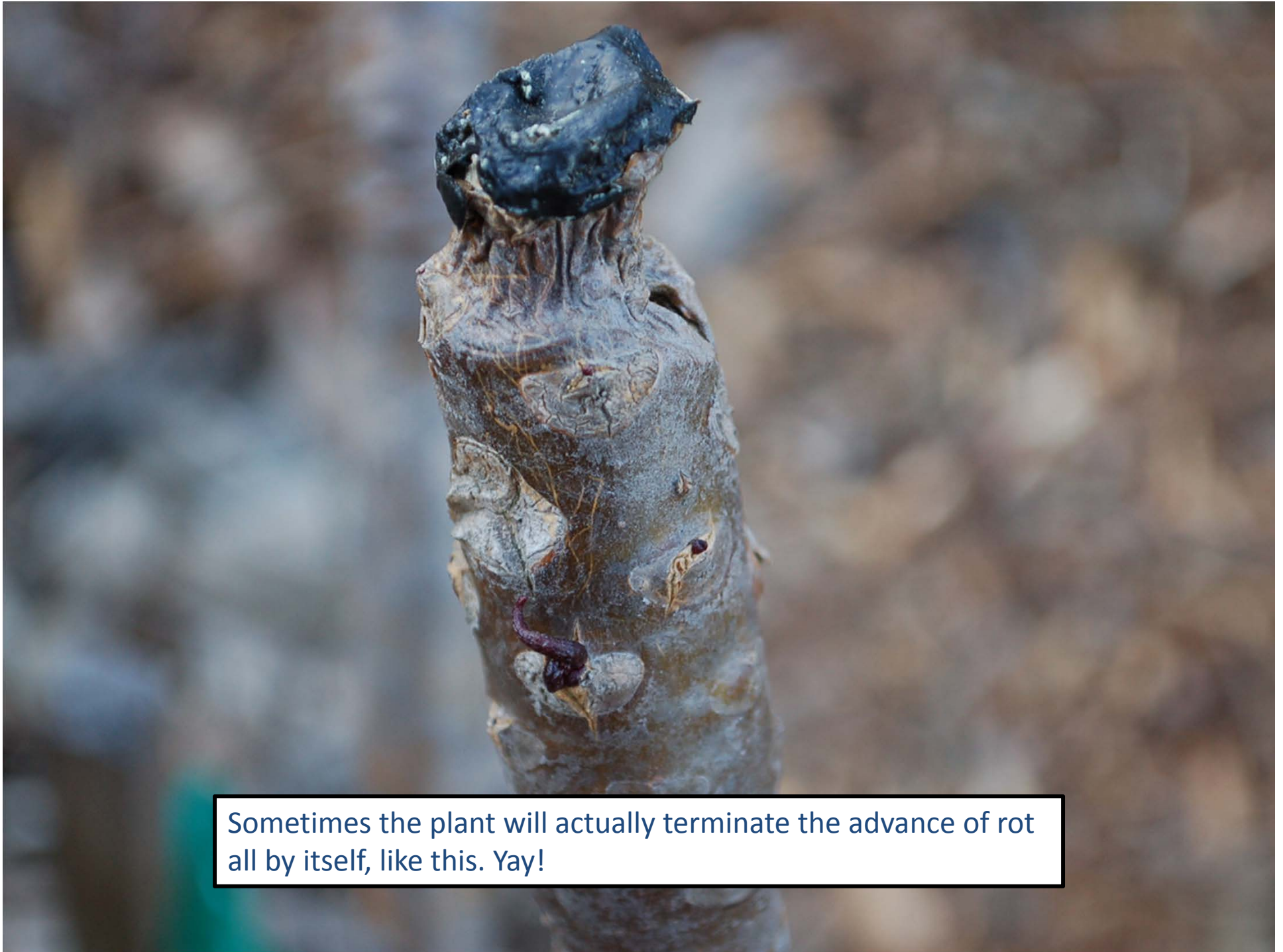


Rot

This is rot...which, if not cut off, will travel down the branch and could go all the way to the roots and kill the whole plant. Rot is soft and moist.

For rot cut down the branch until you see all white flesh. Then clean your cutter with alcohol and cut another inch or so below that for a final cut. As you can see, branches will develop around the cut. Plant saved!





Sometimes the plant will actually terminate the advance of rot all by itself, like this. Yay!



Sometimes you'll see rot on the side of a branch. Still need to cut this the same way...

Here's an example of rot far down the branch...





DO NOT CUT OFF YOUR INFLOS IN WINTER! Many of them will regenerate blooms the next year. But if you see inflos rot like this, definitely cut them off.

Sometimes the rot in the inflo will travel in to the branch,
which is why it's a good idea to cut rotted inflos.



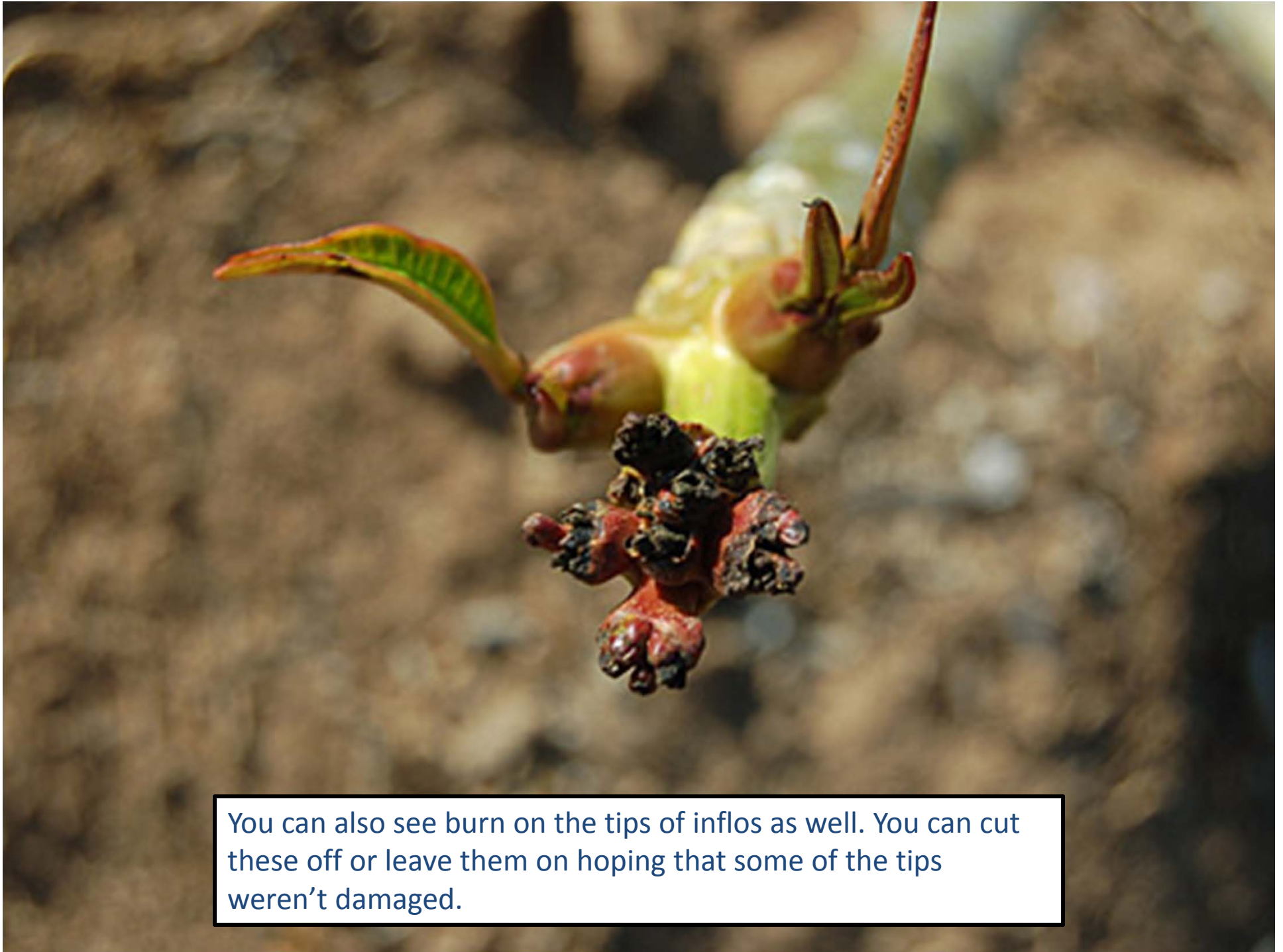


Tip burn

Sometimes a branch tip will actually “burn” from cold temps.

This is a “dry” damage and will not kill a branch or plant. As you can see, more branches develop under the burn.





You can also see burn on the tips of inflos as well. You can cut these off or leave them on hoping that some of the tips weren't damaged.



Nubbing

Sometimes the tip of a branch will just nub – no visible damage, but just naked. It will not produce anymore leaves or inflos.



January 2012

Every tip on this Celadine nubbed in 2012. This shows the new branches growing out from the nubs.



Today


And this is that plant 2 years later. Very well recovered...



Today

This is that plant on the left, next to its “brother,” from the same mother plant and planted at the same time, but DIDN’T nub that winter. Who knows why the one did and the other didn’t.

Root rot



Another form of cold damage is root rot. The soil gets so cold that the roots rot and die, thus killing the plant. If you see this happening, you may be able to cut the top part of the plant off and root it in the spring...



Here is a cutting that rooted from the bottom but terminated the rot on its own and started re-rooting above that...

Leaves or no leaves?

As you can see, some plants will lose their leaves in winter and some won't. Even though some varieties don't lose their leaves, generally they are still dormant.

Seed pods

Since seed pods take more than 8 months to mature, they have to survive over winter. Worry not, they are designed to survive.

Watering in Winter



It's easy...don't water your plants over winter!