

Plant Freeze

By: Melinda Sperl

Protecting your plants from freeze depends on the temperature it actually gets, type of plant, where they are planted and how they are irrigated.

Without proper preparation, you can spend a lot of money each year replacing plants. If we have the normal winter for our area, we don't lose too many plants. Hard freezes, on the other hand, can do a lot of damage to your home and plants. Proper planning can go a long way.

Healthy plants going into a freeze have a much better chance of surviving with proper mulching. During a freeze mulch maintains the ground temperature and moisture of the ground thus protecting the roots from freeze. Water before a freeze but not during the actual freeze or you will have icicles. In most cases the plant will sustain only leaf burn but the roots will live which is the most important part of the plant.

Most lawn grass has shallow root systems and is dormant now. We are having an unseasonably early cold snap and although some lawns were green last week they will naturally turn brown at this time. If you have just fertilized your grass or over seeded rye grass when it freezes, water before a freeze and it should survive without a problem.

During any freeze, we recommend wrapping all exposed pipes including hoses and irrigation backflow devices. During a light freeze wrap the backflow in a towel but in a hard freeze, turn off your irrigation system, drain the water and wrap any exposed pipes. We have instructions on our website for complete system shut off during a hard freeze and will send upcoming posts.

Bring in any small potted plants and cover those that you leave out in the elements. Cover plants with any material except plastic. Again, make sure you water your plants even if you cover them, as potted plants are especially susceptible to freezing.

Fruit trees are grafted and can easily freeze if left to the elements. If they cannot be moved, covering above the graft will at least insure the survival of a treasured tree.

Christmas lights (not LED) work well as warmers for trees, palms and potted plants. Please make sure you have the electricity well away from water and only use outdoor electrical cords.

Happy Gardening!

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