

Protecting Plants In The Event Of A Freeze

by Rainbow Gardens

Does a freeze warning make your anxiety level go up? Does the thought of dragging plants in and out, scrambling for old blankets and sheets have you wishing you didn't have any plants to worry about? We've got you and your plants covered here at Rainbow Gardens (figuratively and literally). Read on for our tips for keeping your plants protected and living in the event of a freeze.

1. Plant Protection Products:Whether you need to buy something like our plant protection blanket or just gather up your old sheets, blankets and tarps, I would I suggest doing this now before another freeze is forecasted. Buy your supplies now, or gather and organize your home protection now, so when the weather turns on a dime, you'll be prepared for it.

Always remember that when covering your plants, use your blankets first and then plastic. NEVER plastic first! Organize protection now.

2. Moving Plants: Do you have a plan for if you choose to move plants inside to protect them? Where are you going to put them? Clear out a space in the back of your garage so your plants have a new home ready when the temperatures drop. You don't want to be shifting things around at the same time you have to move plants...no fun and hard work!

- Remember that prolonged periods of leaving your garage open in the cold can cause your plants to still get nipped.
- If you are bringing them all the way indoors, quarantine them in the garage for a period of time first to make sure you aren't bringing any bugs into the house too.
- How are you going to move them? Simple tricks like sliding a dolly under the edge of a big pot and securing a strap around the pot and dolly can make this task a lot easier....and safer. Moving plants to protect them from freeze damage just isn't fun, but it's worse figuring everything out when it's already so cold your hands are almost too numb to lift a thing. Bend with your knees, and for goodness sake, get help!

3. Water:

Before a freeze – If a freeze is predicted, watering your plants deeply the day before or morning of (12-24 hours before is best), can help to insulate them. Plant cells that are full of water are better protected than those that are not. Soil that is moist also stays warmer than soil that is dry. Try to aim for watering under the foliage as much as possible.

After a freeze – Do not think that you are doing your plants a favor by watering your frozen leaves to "thaw" them. All you will be doing is killing them. Don't do it.

4. Sunshine: After a freeze, sunshine can be great! But it can also be a death sentence to your plants if you don't remove your freeze protection. Even if there are freezing temperatures predicted the following night, if the temps are up and the sunshine is out during the day, remove the protection and let your plants soak it up. If you don't, you risk cooking your plants. Don't cook them.

5. After the Fact: So you forgot to cover one of your plants and it now barely stands, with shriveled up leaves, brown and pathetic. You think you are performing an act of mercy by taking the pruners to it. Stop! Don't do it! Those ugly limbs and stems could be the difference between life or death for your plant. Leaving them in place, though ugly as all get out, will better protect its roots from another possible freeze. Leave

them be until early spring, and try to think of them as just an “awkward phase” your plant has to go through to be beautiful again. Love them anyway.

A little forethought can ease the stress of struggling to keep your plants alive. And who needs extra stress through the holidays and new year anyway? Stay warm my friends.

~The Happy Gardener, Mulroy