

The Scoop The Gateway Garden Club

Spring will soon be here. YEA! What do you need to do to save your garden plants from a Spring cold snap and what to do if we have another ice storm. Here are a few helps.

OK, so your early plants are up and growing and cold weather is in the forecast. How cold is it going to get?

1. Light freeze is 29-32 degrees F. will kill some annuals and vegetables; and can cause cosmetic injury on some hardier plants
2. Moderate freeze is 25-28 degrees F. will kill annuals and vegetables; and damage perennials
3. Hard freeze is anything below 24 degrees F. and will kill annuals and vegetables, perennials will have extensive damage.

Five things to try;

1. Water the soil because damp soil heats up in warm daytime temperatures and retains heat and keeps the air above it warmer by almost 5 degrees. Water in the morning before the freezing temperatures arrive so foliage will be dry when it gets cold.
2. Cover tender plants before nightfall. It is best to use woven fabric or row cover and not plastic. Try to keep the covering off plants by staking the covering above the ground. Drape the fabric over the entire plant and pin it to the ground with landscape pins or bricks. Uncover in the morning when temperature is above freezing. You can also use buckets, milk jugs or tubs but remove before they get too hot and cook your plants.
3. Capture Radiant heat by filling jugs with water that will absorb the heat in the sunshine during the day, and it is better if they are painted black. Then set them near your plants. In a hurry, you can use hot water in your jugs.
4. Manage the mulch by leaving it on perennials as long as possible. Mulch keeps the ground cooler so plants are less likely to break dormancy. Once plants start to grow pull mulch away from crowns but keep it close so you can push it over tender new growth for protection if a hard freeze is predicted.
5. Don't clean up too early because previous year's growth helps insulate the crown and stems from the cold.

What about Ice?

Before the ice arrives wrap evergreen shrubs from the bottom to top with twine to hold the branches together

Immediately after you need to let the ice melt on its own. Do Not shake the plant or branches. Do Not spray more water on to melt because it may freeze too. And Do Not use harmful salt products to melt the ice.

After the ice is melted give the plant time to heal on its own. Sagging branches may straighten after several days. Then evaluate the damage and if 50% is ruined, remove the whole plant. Some branches may be tied back into place with "panty hoses" or bungee cord.

The Gateway Garden Club is a member of the Garden Club of Kentucky, inc. and National Garden Club. For more information call Becky Oliver at 270-522-3150