



Frost Damaged Plants



It is that time of year...Jack Frost wreaks havoc on our yards. With overnight lows dropping into the low 30's, and often times even lower, we must prepare for all out assault.

It is important to protect any frost sensitive plants in the late fall and winter months when temperatures drop below 32 degree's. A few of the most susceptible plants include: Lantana, Bougainvillea, Natal Plum, Citrus Tree's, Cape Honeysuckle, Myoprum, any variety of ficus-tree, and any tropical type plants. If you are unsure if your plant is frost sensitive it is better to be safe than sorry.

My first weapon of choice is the foliage on the plant itself. I STRESS putting away all your pruners until at least late February, or until the overnight temperatures stay above the 32 degree mark. The top layers of foliage act as insulation for the underlying layers protecting them from extreme temperatures, so it is vital that you do not prune your plants in late fall and winter months, even if they have sustained frost damage.

Most plants can survive a few nights of frosty temperatures, so if you do forget to protect your plants do not fret. Instead you will want to prepare your plant protection for the following frosty evening. Watering your plants well in the late evenings, I prefer between 1-2am, in which case you may want to set your timer, will provide extra heat as the water evaporates. You may also look to cover your plants. Some items you can use to cover your plants are: newspaper, sheets, blankets, cardboard boxes, paper bags, burlap, straw or leaves piled on top of the plant, Christmas lights (the large lights work the best), floating row covers, wall-o-water, and liquid seaweed (spraying this on the foliage gives you approximately 4 degrees of frost protection. You will never want to use plastic, and any of the above coverings should be removed at least every 24-48 hours. I prefer removing the coverings in the morning and replacing them every evening. If you have cacti or small seedlings in your yard you can look to place Styrofoam cups on top of them, but you will want to be sure to remove them each morning. When covering plants be sure the covering touches the ground so as to capture the heat coming from the ground.

Once we have entered into our spring time temperatures you can finally look to prune back your heavy plants, and remove any dead foliage. I also like to give them a jump start by fertilizing them with a product high in nitrogen, such as my [Extreme Granules](#). Nitrogen provides your plants with higher nutrient levels, which is vital during periods of high growth.