

The ladybug



A bi-monthly vegetable gardening newsletter for Hidalgo County, TX

Understanding frosts and freezes

January, 2020

Winter brings the danger of frosts and freezes to Texas gardens. Home gardeners can minimize these losses by understanding how cold affects plants and implementing diverse strategies to protect them.

Two types of cold events can damage plants in Texas: “freezes” and “frosts”. A **freeze** bring sudden, steep plunges in temperature, wind speeds of more than 4 mph, and masses of cold air. They may bring clouds and precipitation. These freezes create uniformly cold temperatures throughout the plant canopy, sometimes *damaging the plants from their lowest to highest points*.

Frosts occur when the sky is clear and winds are less than 4 mph. During the day, the sun’s radiation heats the plants and soil; at night, they lose radiation back to the sky. Plants and other objects

cool faster when skies are clear because of the loss of radiation.

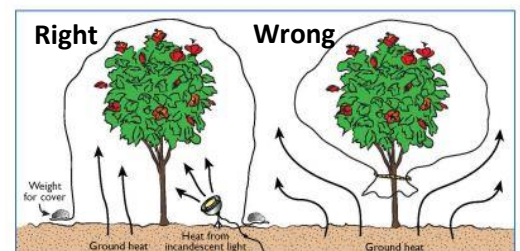
Under radiative conditions, the leaves, stems, and other plant structures that have full sky exposure can be as much as 5 degrees colder than the recorded air temperature. This is why some plants show frost injury even when the recorded air temperatures did not drop below 32°F.



How to protect your plants from cold weather

- DO water the soil a couple of days before the temperature drop. DON'T water leaves and stems. Water needs to be applied while temperatures are above 45 degrees and remember to turn off your irrigation system if freezing temperatures are expected.
- Cover your plants with a sheet to help retain soil heat in freezing temperatures. Cardboard boxes and large plastic trash cans work too. The cover will help trap the heat rising from the soil, so do not wrap your plant at the bottom. You need to drape the cover over the plant, so it touches the ground on all sides and secure with something heavy. Do not forget to uncover the plants once temperatures rise above freezing or the sun comes out.
- For mildly cold sensitive plants a 4-inch layer of a woody mulch may provide sufficient protection.
- Potted plants can be moved indoors or grouped together against a structure and covered with an old sheet.

Once temperatures return to normal DO NOT prune the damaged plants, they just went through a shock and pruning will only further shock them. Give your plants time to recover, wait until you see new growth and are well past the possibility of more freezing temperatures before pruning. [Click here](#) for more information on frost and freeze damage in plants.



Recipe of the month: Oatmeal and veggie patties

Ingredients:

1.5 cups of oatmeal
 2-3 cups of water
 1 onion chopped
 1 zucchini shredded or other favorite vegetable
 2 eggs
 ½ bunch of cilantro chopped
 Season to taste
 Non-stick spray or oil

What to do:

1. Place oatmeal in a large bowl
2. Pour water until it covers the oatmeal. Do not mix or stir, let stand for 15 minutes
3. Strain oatmeal until water is removed.
4. Add all other ingredients to oatmeal. Mix well.
5. Make small patties (2-3 inch) from oatmeal mixture. Set aside.
6. Spray large skillet with nonstick spray, Heat skillet over medium heat.
7. Cook patties until lightly brown.

Prep Time: 15 minutes
Cook Time: 25 minutes

Nutrition Facts

Amount Per Serving		
Calories	120	Calories from Fat 30
		% Daily Value*
Total Fat	3.5g	5%
Saturated Fat	1g	5%
Trans Fat	0g	
Cholesterol	60mg	20%
Sodium	130mg	5%
Total Carbohydrate	17g	6%
Dietary Fiber	3g	12%
Sugars	2g	
Protein	5g	
Vitamin A	6%	Vitamin C 15%
Calcium	2%	Iron 8%



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