

A GUIDE TO PROTECTING YOUR PLANTS THIS WINTER



With winter bringing the cold and frosty weather, you're probably like most people and getting worried about how the winter weather will affect your plants. So we have come up with a list of things you can do to protect your plants and help them stay in good condition until the new year.

Steps on How to Keep Plants Alive for Longer During Winter

Know Your Plants

Some plants really don't mind the winter weather or care about getting less light. However, plants that need bright or direct light will likely be affected, so you may need to move them around to maximise their light exposure. Many plants will also struggle with the cold and frost, so you may find it easier to move these and place them in a greenhouse, garage or conservatory whilst the harsh weather continues.



What Plants Need Protection in Winter?

In warmer climates (above 10°C), tender plants can be overwintered, if being kept in the garden, with appropriate protective coverings as listed below. If temperatures go below 10°C we recommend moving tender plants inside or cover them. For cold or exposed areas, hardy plants may also need a little protection from the harsh elements. Evergreen and potted plants are at particular risk too, so be sure to give extra attention to these.

When Should You Start to Protect Plants?

You should begin preparing your plants with cultivation methods or protective wrappings as soon as the first signs of frost appear. To protect plants later in the season, cultivation practices can be altered in the middle of the summer, and long-term planning can include planting shelter belts or finding the right location for new plants. This can be accomplished at any time throughout the year.





HOW TO PROTECT PLANTS FROM WINTER DAMAGE

Below we have a few tips on how to protect your established plants in winter, but we also have a guide to protecting your plants that have yet to be planted.

Feeding

Fertilisers with a lot of nitrogen should not be applied late in the growing season. These may begin to produce sluggish growth that is prone to freezing.

Soil Cover

For the vegetable patch, soil exposure can result in the leaching of nutrients. Using green manure, like mustard, sown in September can reduce this leaching.

Mulching

By covering the plants with mulch you can help prevent compaction and soil erosion caused by heavy rain or snow.

Overwinter Plants By Wrapping Them

Plants can be protected from cold, wet weather by wrapping them with horticultural fleece. Winter wrapping is ideal for fragile and hardy plants in cold or exposed locations. Place winter covering around plants as soon as there is a chance of frost, usually late September to February. After the severe frost has passed and the spring growth has begun, remove wrappings in stages.

To protect plants, wrap them with materials like fleece, hessian, straw, and polystyrene. Remove covers when times of warmer weather conditions are expected. But be sure to return the coverings if the cold weather returns.

In the winter, tender climbers can have their lower stems covered with straw. Secure the canes with string or garden twine and wrap fleece or netting around them. Shrubs and hardy plants may need security in cold or uncovered areas. Make a frame of bamboo canes around the plant, pack it with straw, and cover it with netting to safeguard smaller specimens. A waterproof cover can be added during periods of rain to keep it from rotting and getting wet.

A layer of straw sandwiched between sheets of wire netting can surround larger specimens. Straw can be packed behind and around the branches of shrubs that are growing against walls. With a polystyrene cap to keep out the rain and a layer of straw covering the crown of tree ferns. However, complete wrapping is advised in colder regions.

Rot may develop in the plant's crown if water is trapped beneath the wrappings. It is essential to clear the plant's base of any damp material and fill the crown with plenty of dry materials like straw. The cover must be waterproof.



Containers and potted plants

Keep containers in dry, sheltered areas, grouped together for protection. Prevent roots from freezing in containers by wrapping them with bubble wrap or straw.

Structures

Check all garden structures before winter begins and replace or reattach any panels, roofs, posts, or fences that are missing. Windbreaks or additional plantings like hedges are frequently required on a cold and windy site. On deeply embedded sturdy posts, strategically placing temporary woven hurdles, netting, or other materials of a similar nature can be beneficial as a short term solution.

Drainage

Quickly address drainage issues, as wet soils can increase the likelihood of wind-uprooted young or shallow-rooted trees.

Cover them up

Once the ground is frozen, place a 6-inch layer of mulch or compost around the plants to help keep the roots insulated and provide a buffer from snow.



TIPS FOR OVERWINTERING CITRUS TREES

All citrus fruits are great for fighting winter colds because they are high in vitamin C. However, if you find that they are a little sour on their own, you can juice even the sourest oranges with a little bit of fizzy water and sugar to make a super refreshing and healthy drink.

Winter Feed

Summer feed contains more nitrogen for leaf growth, while winter feed contains more phosphorus and potassium to aid in fruit development. To keep your tree at its best this time of year, use a winter feed every other watering.

Watch for Leaf Drop

Leaf drop can be caused by a sudden or significant temperature change. Citrus trees face the most difficult conditions during the months of January and February due to the short daylight hours and overcast skies. Some varieties are tougher than others, but even in greenhouses with the most light, some limes, especially at this time of year, will develop some leaf drop.





What to do With Strawberry Plants in Winter

Protect strawberries successfully from frost by placing pots and planters in wind-protected locations. Water moderately on frost-free days for strawberries grown in pots that are placed in covered areas. Cover strawberry plants in pots or beds in cool regions with fleece or leaves. Keep the plants covered until the last late frost.

Winter Care for Houseplants

Reduce Watering

You won't need to water houseplants as often. Maintain the practice of only watering when the soil's top two inches appear dry. If you give dormant plants too much water, they will either produce soft, weak growth or rot as water builds up in the compost. The majority of houseplants should only be watered once every two weeks. Water only once every two to three weeks for succulents and never water cacti over winter. You can also stop feeding dormant plants over this period.

Move Into the Light

Move your plants closer to a window to make the most of the daylight. You won't have to worry about them getting burned by the winter sun. Move them into a porch or sunny conservatory so they can get light from all directions. If you don't have these, place your plants on a windowsill facing west or south.

Clean Their Leaves

Snake plants and other indoor plants frequently develop a thick layer of household dust on their leaves. Because of this, less light can reach the leaf surface, making it more difficult for them to produce food. Use a damp cloth to regularly remove dust, or place the plant in a warm shower for five minutes.

Keep Them Warm

They don't like big changes in temperature, so keep them away from cold drafts and windows or doors that are open. Close the curtains at night if they are on a windowsill because they reduce the amount of cold air. Alternately, at night, remove plants from the windowsill.

Don't Stress About Dropped Leaves

Plants may drop some leaves because they don't need them, but this is nothing to worry about.

FAQ's

Why is my evergreen plant dropping leaves in winter?

Evergreens typically shed sparingly throughout the year, but in extremely cold conditions, they may shed completely to protect themselves from the cold. When the plants are still young or growing in pots rather than established in garden soil, it is more common for them to drop leaves after exposure to cold weather. Your plant is likely to re-leaf in the spring, but you can perform a bark test to check its health. They are much more likely to keep their winter foliage in subsequent years if they are planted in the ground and do not have their root ball exposed to cold temperatures for an extended period of time.