

Baby It's Cold Outside!

Protect Your Garden From Frost Damage

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by Annie Plowman

Wow! That was quick! Seems like only weeks ago we were complaining about the heat! But here comes the cold. If you are growing some winter veggies, and I hope you are, it's time to get them a little protection. They want to be tucked in at night and it doesn't have to be pretty, just effective. Been there? Done that? Thought so. I've camped with tube socks on my hands before. Not pretty but, effective. Let's get these babies protected.

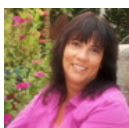
Two easy words: "Frost Cloth". I prefer this to other alternatives because it was designed for the job. It's inexpensive, breathable, readily available, lightweight, repels water, allows light to penetrate, allows air to penetrate, it's washable, reusable... You can lay it over your rows or containers and put a few bricks down to keep it from blowing away. I saw a good suggestion to use those heavy duty black office clips to secure it to containers etc. I thought that was pure genius.

There are a few short cuts I've heard of and even tried. Here is why I don't like them and I don't recommend those methods. 1) Plastic - If it gets hot, your plants will cook; If it's cold they will freeze wherever the plants come in contact with the plastic. AND it doesn't breathe. 2) Burlap..Fabric etc... I don't like these if you are planning to lay them directly over your plants. They absorb water, can weigh down the plant and can cause breakage and um, smushage. (New word..take notes) If the right way is cheap and effective, why go the wrong way? Other fun frost protection... Heat emitting Christmas lights or a plant light. Usually best for trees. With plants that can take the water, even a good soil drenching (water) can help keep the plant warm at night.

Notes for my veggie growing friends: Keep those tender greens protected. If you are growing radishes or root vegetables, they are not ready yet if you don't see their little tops. If you are growing pansies for your salads, don't drown them. What pansies get from the dew is usually sufficient at this time of year.

Things that want some relief from cold nights: tender greens, beans, citrus, avocado, bougainvillea, hibiscus.

Me! It's chilly!



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