

BUCHANAN'S

NATIVE PLANTS

After a Freeze

After a freeze, some plants may show signs of frost damage. Frost damage can present in many ways, but the two most common are brown crispy foliage, or yellow/brown mushy foliage. Here are some things you can do to help protect and nurture a plant with frost/freeze damage.

Don't Prune:

Although frost damage can be unsightly, you should not cut back crispy dead or damaged leaves or branches. This is very difficult for many gardeners, as cutting something unhealthy off their plant feels like the natural thing to do. However, the damaged leaves still have benefit by acting to protect the remaining plant from wind and chill. Besides, pruning promotes tender new growth, which is the last thing we want before winter is over.

The exception to this rule is for mushy foliage on fleshy plants such as aloe vera. Yellow or black mushy foliage should be removed to prevent rot or other diseases from taking hold. Be sure to seal wounds appropriately to prevent infection.

Keep your shears away until spring (late February for perennials and early March for tropical plants) when the weather begins to warm. Spring is the time to cut back dead matter and let new growth take over. Feel free to trim plants all the way to the ground, just leaving a few inches of old growth. After you prune, use fertilizer to feed your plants during their regrowth. Microlife 6-2-4 is an outstanding organic fertilizer that will help your plants with the production of new leaves and branches.

Add Compost/Mulch:

It's never a bad time to add compost and mulch. In fact, adding these two during the winter helps to further insulate plants' root zones while supplying plants with essential nutrients and the microbiology the need to stay healthy and happy. We recommend Leaf Mold Compost from Heirloom Soils of Texas, because it contains a diverse range of microorganisms and is full of both macro and micronutrients for plants. For mulch, the Native Hardwood is best! Apply a 2–3-inch layer around the base of plants, avoiding direct contact with the trunk itself, to help insulate their roots from cold.

Prevent Further Damage:

A damaged plant may not have what it takes to make it through another freeze. Protect these tender plants by bringing them inside if possible. If this isn't possible, wrap them in frost cloth. Drape cloth over the entire plant and secure well at the ground to ensure no wind can move under the cloth. Wrapping a plant may make the difference between life and death in the garden. Try to avoid "lollipop" plants, where cloth is wrapped around the top of the plant but not down to the ground. This leaves the trunk exposed to the elements and can result in the loss of the plant.

Before a hard freeze, water your garden well. Water saturated soil holds heat better than dry soil. Keep damaged plants well-watered but be mindful that plants need less water in cooler weather.