

Fall Crop Frost Protection

BY SARAH McLAUGHLIN

The end of October is the time that many DC gardeners dread...each morning we wake up and rush outside to see if the first frost has come. With the first frost often comes the end of summer crops such as tomatoes, peppers, and summer squash. It's prime time for fall greens such as lettuce, kale, broccoli, and root crops like radishes, beets, and carrots, but they can also be damaged by a heavy frost. With a few easy techniques however, we can extend the season on our fall vegetables and even some of the more hardy summer ones.

When you are thinking about how to prepare your garden for the cold, there are a few important things to remember:

1. Plants in pots will get colder faster. Because the soil in the pot is not surrounded by other soil in the ground, it will lose heat quickly. Consider bringing pots and planters inside for the winter and putting them on a windowsill.
2. If you have plants that are perennials, it is ok to leave them uncovered. They will die off during the winter, but will come back in the spring. It is more important to protect the annual plants that you want to keep on growing late into the year.
3. Covering the soil with mulch, leaves, or straw is the simplest way to keep your soil a little warmer. This method can work well for vegetables that grow under the ground such as carrots and onions, but it will not protect leaves above ground from the frost. This is also a good idea for protecting the roots of more fragile perennials.
4. Some plants are better at tolerating the cold than others. Plants with tender leaves such as basil, lettuce, peppers, and squash will not stand up to a frost very well. However, plants such as collard greens and kale which have tough leaves can grow well into the winter without a problem.

Row Covers

Many people choose to cover their fall plants with a type of row cover to keep their plants protected from the frost a little longer. When you cover your plants, it is important to remember that plants need light, water, and ventilation. Without proper ventilation, plants can get mold or diseases such as powdery mildew.



The best way to ensure that your plants stay warm while still getting these three needs is by covering the plants at night, and uncovering them during the day. There are plenty of materials you may have at home that you can use to cover your plants, such as newspaper, bedsheets, tarps, and plastic. Be sure to use garden stakes, bamboo, or something similar to hold your row cover up and keep it from crushing your plants. Plastic is the best type of row cover to use, because it is non-porous and does not let in any cold air. It is also the most important to take off of the plants during the day, so that they can get fresh air and won't get moldy!

Some people choose to buy materials specifically for covering their garden. One special type of material is called "Remay." This is a blanket sort of material that keeps plants warm while allowing for light, air, and water penetration. People also sometimes choose to build mini-greenhouses, hoopouses, or cold frames over their garden beds; this can be done cheaply and easily and the internet provides plenty of free how-to videos and instruction. In the rooftop garden at Bread for the City, we conducted a workshop where volunteers and clients built several greenhouses protecting 4x8 foot beds for only \$20 each. This was done using inexpensive materials such as pvc pipe, spring clamps, duct tape, and polyethylene plastic.

Now is the time to be thinking about row covers and protecting your plants from the frost...however if you are still unsure about the best way to winterize your garden, stay tuned to oldcitygreen.com for an upcoming workshop where you can get tips and see some examples.

Fall Inspires Plea to the Sun

BY WILLIAM JESSE WYNER

I gaze onto the dimming October skyline. A squirrel frantically darts between two white oak trees, preparing for the cold months. As hard as I try, it's futile to resist the allure of your reflection on the nearby windowpane, or the shallow humming of the industrial leaf-blower in the distance. I regain

my composure and continue to meditate upon the eloquent patchwork of warm colors, softening the coarse edges of branches on the skyline. Once again I am drawn away. A slow, steady steam appears from a neighbor's house. It's laundry day most likely.

Your face dissolves into tiny fragments of light, filtering through clouds and houses. As the last rays of warmth fade from my cheek I feel a deep burn in my chest. A deep craving that cannot possibly be scaled. A heavy and grave exhale escapes between my lips.

"Please don't leave."

I pack my emotions tightly into a confined phrase like a wish upon a penny tossed into a pool. However unlike the penny, my statement is not an empty prayer. I do not sift through the endless sands for hope or change. I only cry out in primitive adolescence, to a familiar face, one of understanding, to heed my call of urgency. Without your presence I am nothing. Without your image I am lost.

The night never hesitates to cast ghostly faces along the bricks. I retreat indoors.

Sarah McLaughlin and William Jesse Wyner are garden consultants with OLD CITY green on 9th and N NW "Where people and plants come together". ♦

+ Changing Hands

Changing hands is a list of most residential sales in the District of Columbia from the previous month. A feature of every issue, this list, based on the MRIS, is provided courtesy of Don Denton, manager of the Coldwell Banker office on Capitol Hill. The list includes address, sales price and number of bedrooms.

Neighborhood	Price	BR
FEE SIMPLE		
BLOOMINGDALE		
215 R ST NW	\$500,000	3
COLUMBIA HEIGHTS		
1206 EUCLID ST NW	\$945,000	6
1418 BELMONT ST NW	\$750,000	7
1535 MONROE ST NW	\$645,000	3
1214 LAMONT ST NW	\$639,000	4
1430 PERRY PL NW	\$525,000	4
3513 CENTER ST NW	\$490,000	3
1336 SHEPHERD ST NW	\$465,000	3
774 IRVING ST NW	\$410,000	2
766 QUEBEC PL NW	\$400,000	3
1340 SPRING RD NW	\$380,000	3
777 HOBART PL NW	\$369,000	4
721 HARVARD ST NW	\$354,000	3