**Plantanswers.com Q’s & A’s**

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Q: Tell us about protecting our citrus from cold weather.

A: In the landscape, citrus needs cold protection depending on how cold it gets and for how long. Kumquats, calomondin, changsha tangerine and satsumas have more cold tolerance than oranges, grapefruit, lemons and lime. I don’t cover my calomondin in the ground, but cover the rest of the citrus whenever the forecast is for temperatures below 26 degrees. Changsha tangerine kumquats and satsumas, especially the Orange Frost selection, can usually tolerate 24 degrees, but it is easier to be safe than sorry.

It is better to protect your plants from the cold weather with cloth materials such as blankets or agricultural fiber (insulate) than to use plastic. Plastic is a good wind breaker, but cold travels directly from the outside to the foliage if the plastic touches the foliage.

If you want a freeze protection material that has the good characteristics of cloth and plastic, check out the new “Plankets.” It is a plasticized fabric that is effective and easy to use. Plankets are available in rectangle or round shapes.

If temperatures fall below 24 degrees or it is expected to be below 28degrees for more than 2 or 3 hours, it is advisable to put a heat source under the freeze covered plant. That means extending an outdoor rated extension cord from the power source and attaching a poultry heat lamp, mechanics light or even a string of holiday lights to keep temperatures under the fabric close to freezing.

Q: I know you recommend that we fertilize our new onion transplants heavily. What type of fertilizer is best?

A: Slow release lawn fertilizer and/or winterizer lawn fertilizer works great. They provide a quick supply of nutrients at a reasonable cost. Side-dress each 8 foot row with 1 cup every 3-4 weeks.

Q: Is it true that we can just mow over pecan and oak leaves where they fall on the lawn rather than rake and bag them?

A: Absolutely! The mowed leaves decompose quickly to provide organic material and nutrients to the lawn.

Q: We have moved our plumeria and bougainvillea into the garage to protect them from cold. Will they be okay without light until next spring? When should we move them back outside?

A: Plumeria and bougainvillea do fine without light and with very limited water until spring. Let the soil dry out completely or limit watering to once a month. The weather stabilizes enough to put them outside sometime between March 15 and April 1.