

Gardening Question and Answer

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Q. We covered our limes but did not provide a heat source. They don't look good after the low temperatures and long period of time with below freezing temperatures. It fell to 22 degrees and was below freezing for one spell of 36 hours straight. Do you think they will recover?

A. I wish I could be optimistic about their well-being, but lime are sensitive to the level of cold and the length of the period that temperatures fall below freezing. If you covered them well you may get some regrowth from the roots.

Q. We did not get a chance to cover our cyclamen during the big freeze. The blossoms were all frozen and dropped but the foliage still looks good. Will they be like the snapdragons and have a second bloom period later this spring?

A. That is the theory, unfortunately, it takes cyclamen much longer to produce new flower buds. In my experience the key to cyclamen rebloom is whether the existing buds were frozen along with the blooms. Check under the leaves to see if the reserve buds are intact.

Q. We were taking your advice and planting several new shade trees this winter, Texas red oak and Mexican white oak. We didn't get them all planted before the cold wave struck. They were against the house but the cold still browned their leaves. Is there any chance the trunk and roots were hurt from the cold?

A. No, the trees should be fine. Go ahead with your plan to plant them. Dig the hole as deep as the root ball and 2 or 3 times as wide. Place the root ball in the planting hole and fill the hole with water. Cover the root area with mulch to reduce evaporation and reduce weeds.

Q. Remind me why it is a good idea to let the leaves decompose on the lawn. How many times would we have to run the mower over them? If it is more than once, wouldn't it be just as easy to rake them up?

A. Leaving the leaves on the lawn to decompose results in the organic material being recycled back to the lawn. It is a waste of valuable organic material to bag leaves and haul them away to the landfill. To me, pushing a mower across the lawn is easier than raking and bagging leaves. Some folks run the mower over the leaves twice. The idea is to cut the leaves into smaller pieces, so they decompose faster. I mow them once. Mowing the lawn in winter is also a good way to keep winter weeds in control.

Q. How come nobody discusses planting the poinsettia in the landscape after it finishes its work in the house?

A. Lots of poinsettias get planted in the landscape and a few survive to rebloom. Plant them in morning or full sun and keep them well watered, especially the first summer. The second challenge is cold weather. They must be planted in a location where they can be protected from freezing temperatures.