

Cold weather is coming and your plants need your help!

Temperatures below 45F for more than a few hours can be damaging for many of our tropical plants. Tropical aroids, orchids and even some trees can be chilled by these conditions. Most of our common fruit trees can withstand these conditions and even produce a good crop of fruit. Frost occurs at 32F with the formation of ice and less than an hour of frost can be severely damaging. Freezes occur below 30F and are the most damaging events for our tropical and subtropical plants.

So be prepared and take action!

Plants Needing Protection from Cold:

- **Tropicals/Subtropicals:** Hibiscus, Bougainvillea, Bird of Paradise, Crotons, Ti Plants, and Angel's Trumpet.
- **Tubers/Bulbs:** Caladium, Colocasia (Elephant's Ear), and Canna lilies.
- **Fruit Trees:** Papaya, Mango, and Avocado.
- **Palms/Ferns:** Sensitive palms, particularly when young, and tropical ferns.

Protection Strategies:

- **Covering:** Use frost cloth, burlap, or old sheets to cover plants. Avoid using plastic directly touching leaves, as it can transfer cold and cause burn.
- **Heat Source:** Place a string of incandescent holiday lights around the plant under the cover to provide slight warmth.
- **Mulching:** Apply a thick layer (3-4 inches) of mulch around the base to insulate the roots.
- **Location:** Bring potted plants indoors or move them to a sheltered, warmer spot against a south-facing wall.
- **Watering:** Water plants well before a freeze, as moist soil retains more heat than dry soil.

Warmly (hee hee),

Kristine de Haseth,

Master Gardener