



Virginia Green Industry Council

For Immediate Use

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Electronic Version:

www.viriniagreen.org

Coping with Winter Plant Damage

The severity of the winter can have adverse effects on newly planted trees and shrubs as well as on established plant materials, according to Lin Diacont, President of the Virginia Green Industry Council.

The principal reason plants die in the cold of winter is that their sap freezes and expands, often forming ice crystals that puncture cell walls. Once a plant cell ruptures, it cannot recover. If this happens to enough cells, the plant will die. This occurs most frequently with a sudden drop in temperature coupled by a stiff wind. Plants have a better chance if it gets cold gradually because the sap has a chance to concentrate, resulting in less water retention and decreased vulnerability to freezing.

The Green Industry Council gives some suggestions to encourage "Green Survival" during the long, cold winter. They suggest checking with your local nursery to be sure the plants you choose for your property are suitable for the climate in your area. Plants are, after all, creatures of climate and soil and they should not be pressed beyond their limits.

Water the plant infrequently, but deeply before the ground freezes to encourage the growth and development of deep root systems. When possible, plant in areas that receive the maximum amount of sunlight during the winter months.

Wind, more than the cold, is the real enemy of plants. They should be protected with wind barriers such as shrubs and bushes, which filter out and deaden the destructive effects of wind. Properly arranged, these can add to the overall beauty of a garden and yard.

When you examine the plants at the end of winter, don't be too hasty in discarding them if they appear dead. Nature may be working on their recovery, so be sure to give them a chance to show their hardiness.

These precautions should help your plants survive the winter to bloom again for you during the spring and summer months as long as you do your part to help them survive.

Go to our consumer website for additional gardening information at www.VirginiaGardening.com

The Virginia Green Industry Council is the voice of the horticulture industry in the Commonwealth and is dedicated to enhancing the beauty of the state's environment, the well-being of our citizens, improving our state's economy, and improving the health and wellness for everyone in Virginia. The Council is made up of providers and consumers of horticultural products and services. The Council works to provide public and industry education, environmental guidelines and other information that will keep Virginia green and growing. For more information, visit www.viriniagreen.org. 540-382-0943 FAX: 540-382-2716

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