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FROST BITE PREVENTION

Terry Hanam

This is not an informational article on how a person can survive while trapped in an upstate New York Catskill Mountain blizzard or how to keep skin youthful while skiing at Tahoe. The type of frost bite we are talking about is botanical frost bite, cold temperature injury to plants in your landscape. BOKAY NURSERY has a long history of experience with plant care and can offer a wealth of advice on how to protect tender plants from winter damage. Here are five suggestions to begin with but be sure to ask a professional at the nursery for additional advice for your specific plants and location.

1) Spray a coat on your plants

There are several brands on the market of a product that is sprayed onto the foliage of plants as winter approaches, *Cloud Cover™* is one type that Bokay Nursery has in stock. The spray acts in a similar way as 'chapstick' does to your lips, sealing in moisture to prevent them from drying out and gives



*A light frost can be anticipated
during the winter season*



Products like Cloud Cover™ and an insulating cover can make the few degrees difference during a cold spell

protection from the cold. The spray does not harm the plant and has no harmful chemicals. While you're at it, spray cut holiday trees, garlands and wreaths as well to help evergreen foliage stay fresh and hold needles longer.

2) Decorative lights

String holiday lights or any sort of lighting for the small amount of heat they produce that can make a few crucial degrees of difference in the temperatures touching the plant. This is particularly effective for citrus varieties. The addition of these lights during the winter make a profound difference in the attractiveness of the winter garden in the evening.

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Small and Magic Thank You

Next time you stop in the nursery, consider picking out a few packets of seeds. Select your favorite varieties of vegetables or flowers. Adorn each packet with a small ribbon and a post-it message that says THANK YOU. These are the idea and inexpensive way to show your appreciation for the mail carrier, bus driver, school secretary, understanding receptionist and the always friendly neighbor and the helpful repair person. Say it all with seeds that will bring brightness when they are planted in spring.

Select easy to grow favorites for your thank yous



WINTER PROJECTS

This is a project that children can help with and is pretty and very useful but the busy gardening seasons of Spring, Summer and Fall make it difficult to get it done. The mission: Hose Guards. Search out hardware stores, lumber yards, home improvement centers and your own scrap wood for strong straight pieces of wood. The ideal length is anything longer than 18". Banister rungs, porch rails, old broom or shovel handles and faring strips can all be painted and decorated to become unique and appreciated garden art. The decorated stakes can be hammered in at any garden and walkway corners to keep the garden hose from being dragged across plants. Great gift idea to make!

AMARYLLIS – A Gift That Needs No Wrapping

Homer knew what he was talking about when he said “To sport with Amaryllis in the shade...” He was not just a poetic nature lover who wished to dance with the flowers, the Amaryllis he was referred to was a beautiful shepherdess maiden called Amaryllis. The spectacular blooms can easily be part of your home or office winter décor and they are one of the easiest bulbs to achieve indoor blooms from. The mass marketing of Amaryllis bulbs in large store chains and even grocery checkout lines is testimony to the ease in which they come to flower.

Bokay Nursery has a wonderful selection of these bulbs that is different from the non-nursery versions. The bulbs are hand selected and much larger than discount store varieties that may have been exposed to freezing temperatures during transport. When making a selection, choose bulbs that are firm and have no distinct odor to them. If you are having a difficult time deciding which color is preferred, make it easy and get several. Plant one now and hold the others in a cool, dry location to plant another every 3 or 4 weeks.

Planting could hardly be easier because Amaryllis bulbs do not need a lot of room or a lot of soil. Choose a pot that will not tip over when the plant has developed a large stem and weighty flower. Place one layer of large pebbles in the bottom of the pot to aid in drainage and



photos: www.julihofmann.com

Easy to pot and get started!

fill half way with a potting soil. Place the bulb, roots side down into the soil. Add additional soil so that what remains in view is one quarter or one eighth of the bulb above the soil. Water gently and thoroughly one time and withhold watering again until the soil is almost dry. Over watering will cause the bulb to rot from the constant moisture. Continue to water in this manner and avoid fertilizing, that's the magic of bulbs, they are a self contained growing package designed to reproduce by blooming!

Ask a BOKAY NURSERY employee about how to handle the bulb after the bloom is finished so that repeat blooms can be planned for next year.

For botanist gardeners: The Amaryllis with the huge showy flower that is popular during this time of year for indoor blooms is really Hippeastrum from South and Central America while the Amaryllis belladonna, or 'naked lady' as it is sometimes called, hails from South Africa.

HOLIDAY BERRIES

Terry Hanam

One of the easiest, hardiest and dependably beautiful berry producing plants are the Cotoneasters (Ka-tone-ee-aster). While hollies may have stolen the show for holiday berries at one time, Cotoneasters are a likely contender in Monterey County gardens. There are deciduous (lose their leaves in the winter) Cotoneasters but the most popular varieties are evergreen. These stout shrubs have many species to choose from, ranging in size from arching tall plants that approach small trees in height to the majority that gravity seems to have weighted them down to be ground hugging creepers.

In bloom the plants are a white or soft pink explosion of tiny

flowers usually in late Spring and early summer. If this was all the plant did they would be well worth the addition into the landscape but their talents have only



Cotoneasters provide abundant seasonal color and food for winter birds

just begun, it's their berries that really steal the show. When the

rest of the landscape seems to get a bit drab, the Cotoneasters are there to break up the grays and browns of late fall and winter. The small berries cover each plant in a profusion of reds or oranges that brightens everything around them. Locate these plants on banks, in rock-gardens and as ground covers in sunny, low maintenance landscapes.

A patio/container plant that is also prized with Bonsai hobbyist is the Thyme-Leafed Cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster microphyllus* var. *thymifolius*). These plants make a great host/hostess gift when a bit of florist foil is added around the pot.

Don't forget to prune a few berried branches for decorating holiday tables or for making the office coffee station festive.

CHRISTMAS TREES TO REMEMBER

Terry Hanam

Remember this holiday season with a potted tree that can be planted in the landscape or kept in a planter for years to come. Here are a few top choices that begin the list of BOKAY NURSERY recommendations. Be sure to ask us about additional suggestions beyond this list.

Large Trees:
Eventually become screening plants and evergreen additions to a deciduous wooded area. Giant Sequoia, Bosnian



Pine, Austrian Black Pine, Italian Stone Pine, Deodar or Lebanon Cedar.

Medium Trees or Large Shrub: These are the large plants for small landscapes becoming focal points to work additional small plants in around them. Tanyosho Pine, Japanese Black Pine, Columnar Junipers, Emerald Arborvitae, Holly Varieties

Small Garden, Patio and Table Top Trees:
Slow growing and diminutive choices that will keep their small stature are the Dwarf

Monterey Cypress makes a fine table top tree and can be planted outdoors later

Alberta Spruce, Sculpted Junipers, Hinokke Cypress, Dwarf White Pine, Trained Rosemary, Yuletide Camellia.

All the suggestions are outdoor plants but may be brought inside for a few days, water them well before bringing them inside. To keep them healthy avoid placing them near heat sources such as a fireplace or wood stove. Decorate and enjoy for several days but plan to transition back to the great outdoors soon. If your house is kept very warm and the temperatures outside are significantly colder, take the time to place the plant outside during the day and bring into a garage at night for a few nights before keeping them outside for good.

3) Mulch

This is the top dressing that does it all! There is not a season that goes by when Bokay Nursery is not recommending mulch and it is not because we have great prices on excellent mulch, it is because the benefits of mulch are year round. During winter the mulch holds in heat surrounding the plant and protects the roots like a blanket.

4) Water

Drought stressed plants are much more likely to suffer or succumb to cold temperatures than a healthy plant that has hydrated leaf tissue. Do not over water during the winter months when plants are not using as much water but check the soil a few inches down to make sure the plants are not drying. Aside from a few exceptions, it is best to avoid fertilizing plants in late fall and winter.

5) Row-cover cloth

...or even use an old bed sheet. When the evening forecast predicts a freezing night, keep some light coverings handy to drape over tender plants. These coverings do not offer insulation to any great degree but they prevent frost from resting directly on the foliage. Remove covering by midmorning each day.