Q. I lost a lot of plants last year to the cold weather. What can I do to protect them this year?
A. Last year, the cold weather was unusually cold. A repeat is not expected this year; however, there are certain things you can do each year to minimize damage from cold fronts.

Container plants:
- Place containerized plants under cover in a Florida room or garage. Even placing them in a carport, under a tree canopy or inside a screened lanai will offer protection.
- Massing them together will give them more protection than leaving them alone. Wrap the container walls or mound with mulch to insulate them.

Landscape plants:
- Cover cold-sensitive plants with frost covers, sheets, or blankets being sure to place them all the way to the ground.
- Make a mini greenhouse-like structure and wrap with plastic taking care not to let the plastic touch the plants.
- Invert large cardboard boxes filled with leaves or newspapers on individual plants or encase small seedlings under empty milk jugs with the bottoms cut off.
- Placing lamps or Christmas lights inside coverings will add additional warmth. Make sure the lights don’t touch the leaves or burning will result.
- Make a soil bank around young fruit trees to protect their graft area. Insulating tree wraps can be used on other young trees.
- Leave the soil under citrus trees barren so it absorbs heat during the day which can radiate up to the canopy at night.
- Irrigating plants before a freeze helps the soil absorb and radiate heat, but avoid overwatering or getting the leaves wet.
- Do not structurally prune or fertilize until spring.

Remember to keep your plants healthy year-round and plant them in the right place for additional insurance.

Special Event:
Master Gardener Help Desk, Phillippi Farmhouse Market, 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m. every Wednesday. Workshop: Planning a Spring Vegetable Garden, Noon-1:00 p.m. January 5

PLANTING GUIDE
Vegetables & herbs: Anise, beets, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrot, cauliflower, celery, chervil, collards, coriander, dill, eggplant, endive, fennel, garlic, kale, kohlrabi, leek, lettuce, mustard, onions, peas, parsley, pepper, radish, rutabaga, sage, spinach, squash, strawberries, Swiss chard, thyme, tomato and turnips.
Annuals: Begonia, Calendula, foxglove, geranium, Impatiens, Lobelia, ornamental cabbage and kale, petunia, Phlox, Salvia, statice, strawflower, and Verbena.
Perennials: African iris, aster, blue daze, blue sage, Buddleia, bush daisy, candytuft, Dianthus, Gerbera daisy, Pentas, Salvia, Scabiosa, Shasta daisy, Verbena and Viola.
**Blooming plants:** Allamanda, Bauhinia vine, bottlebrush, Cape honeysuckle, Cassia, Chinese hat, Jatropha, lion’s ear, Mexican flame vine, Mexican sunflower, orchid tree, Philippine violet, red and yellow shrimp plants, silk floss tree, Thunbergia, and Tibouchina.

**Fruits in Season:** Avocado, banana, carambola, cherimoya, citrus (calamondin, grapefruit, key lime, lemon, lime, orange, tangelo and tangerine), hog plum, Indian jujube, kumquat, papaya, pecan, persimmon, pomegranate, and sea grape.

**Upcoming educational classes:**
Register online [http://sarasota.extension.ufl.edu](http://sarasota.extension.ufl.edu) or call 861-9900.

- Organic Vegetable Gardening, Orange Blossom Community Garden, 18th & Orange, 1:00 p.m. December 4
- Florida Yards & Neighborhoods: Creating Your Florida Yard, North Port Library, 6:30 p.m. December 7
- Red Imported Fire Ants, Twin Lakes Park, 10:00 a.m. December 8
- Irrigation 101, Twin Lakes Park, 1:00 p.m. December 8
- Florida Yards & Neighborhoods: Creating Your Florida Yard, Fruitville Library, 2:00 p.m. December 13
- Irrigation 101, Longwood Park, 5:30 p.m. December 13
- Composting Workshop, St. Wilfred Episcopal Church, 3773 Wilkinson Rd, 4:00 p.m. December 14
- Color in the Winter Landscape, Twin Lakes Park, 10:00 a.m. December 15
- Rodent & Mole Management, Twin Lakes Park, 1:00 p.m. December 15
- Sustainable Living in the Era of Climate Change, Twin Lakes Park, 4:00 p.m. December 15
- Native Shrubs for the Landscape, Shamrock Park, 2:00 p.m. December 16
- Rain Barrel Workshop, Twin Lakes Park, 10:00 a.m. December 18
- Organic Vegetable Gardening, Orange Blossom Community Garden, 18th & Orange, 1:00 p.m. ‘January 1

**For information**
The **Master Gardener Help Desk** now has an email address: mghelpdesk@scgov.net to answer questions. It is open Monday-Friday from 9:00 a.m.-Noon and 1:00-4:00 p.m. You can call (941-861-9807) or visit our office at Twin Lakes Park on Clark Road east of I-75 with landscape questions. We also have weekly satellite help desks at the four south county libraries and every Monday at Gulf Gate Library.

(Patricia Porchey is an Urban Horticulture Agent with University of Florida/IFAS Sarasota County Extension. Website: [http://sarasota.ifas.ufl.edu](http://sarasota.ifas.ufl.edu))

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