

## Gardening Question and Answer

For Distribution 01-23-2017

Q. The freeze was pretty devastating to my landscape and garden. Can I just start pruning out the frozen wood on my citrus and other plants?

A. It is best if you wait awhile to confirm how much damage actually occurred. Another reason to wait is that we could still receive more cold weather. The stems and burnt foliage provide some protection for other stems.

How much damage to citrus that occurred will depend on the species of the plant and its exposure. Leave the existing stems until mid March to see where the kill lines are. You will eventually cut below the live wood line. Expect most damage to limes and lemons. Grapefruit, oranges and satsumas may just be defoliated.

Q. When can we plant potatoes?

A. You can plant potatoes now. Obtain seed potatoes with obvious eyes from the garden store. Cut them in pieces of at least 2 inches square so that one good eye exists in each piece. Plant the pieces 18-24 inches apart one foot deep in a trench. Cover the seed pieces with 4 inches of soil and then add more soil each week as the stems grow up and out of the trench. Harvest of some plants can begin when the plants begin to bloom. All plants should be harvested by the times the tops die in late May.

Q. It looks like the freeze wiped out all my winter annuals. Should I replant everything? We have a long dreary period to wait before we can plant the warm weather flowers.

A. The freeze certainly killed the tops of petunias but pansies should be in good shape. If you did not cover cyclamen, it may have frozen back. Snapdragons probably had all the blooms frozen and some foliage but they should regrow in time for a March and April bloom period. Also look closely at your stocks, calendula, and dianthus. They are probably in the same state as the snapdragons. Replant is okay but most cool weather annuals will regrow from the surviving root system and plant base.

Q. It is hard to believe but we have a rufous hummingbird that is still visiting our sugar water feeder this winter. He even hung on through the freezes!

A. Yes, it is relatively common to host rufous hummingbirds all through the winter. They are unpredictable independent characters.

Q. Is there still time to plant onion transplants? How about carrot seed?

A. Yes, most years, onion, broccoli, cabbage, and chard can be planted as transplants successfully in early February. Carrot, English peas, turnips, beets, and lettuce can be planted by seed.

Q. What can we be doing for the lawn to help make it successful over the next growing season? Will fertilizing now work?

A. Wait to fertilize until about May 1 when the grass plants can utilize the nitrogen. The most effective lawn activity this time of the year is to aerate and top dress. Rent an aerator to open up the soil and then add one half inch of compost to provide organic material.