

The Garden Corner

By: Art Kammerlohr

Master Gardeners of Johnson County Missouri

Have you noticed how rapidly the plants for sale are flying off the shelves of local vendors and nurseries? Pause for a moment .... When is our average last frost date? April 15th, right? Stay with me. What kind of winter did we just have? I thought it was kind of long, didn't you? I also think the winter of 2019 isn't quite over. The Point? "Killing" frost or freezes are in our future. What are we going to do with all that stuff we just put into the ground?

Let's start with some of the easiest, first. If you're a "gardening nut" like me, you probably have plants arriving almost on a daily basis. The ground is wet and best left alone. For the just arrived crowd, open the boxes and leave them in the barn. Check to see if they need water. Anything you can move inside – MOVE INSIDE!

For the older perennials just breaking through the crust you shouldn't have a problem down to Severe Freeze (24 degrees or colder). If it will make you feel any better, throw some mulch on them and walk away. That brings us to the stuff you and I just put into the ground. If we choose to do nothing, two things are going to happen: our plants will probably die; and, we'll be going to the bank to get more money to buy replacements. Nope! Not me!

Grab some old cotton pillow cases and bed sheets and cover all the new arrivals. Make certain the cover goes to the ground. The idea is to trap the heat of the earth inside. If tomorrow morning is your freeze; then, you will cover your plants during the early afternoon the day before thereby capturing as much heat as possible prior to the plunging temperatures. If you don't have a bunch of old bed sheets, you can use what I use. The name is: Reusable Frost Cover for Plants. It is 8 feet wide and 24 feet long and is made of fabric. As of two weeks ago, it cost twelve dollars and ninety-nine cents (\$12.99). You don't have a lot to protect? That's alright. You can put a bucket over it. Newspapers, cardboard boxes, empty plastic milk jugs. The important concept to grasp is conservation of heat. Anything you can do to capture and conserve heat will guarantee the survival of your new friend. Two more pieces of trivia and we're done until next month. If you use plastic, make sure the plant's surface doesn't touch the plastic. Plants and plastic are not friends. And, after the morning temperatures rise above 32 degrees, take the covers off. You won't believe how fast the plants can overheat.

Questions? Comments and/or suggestions, write to: 370 NW 121 Rd., Warrensburg, MO 64093 or email: maandpak@embarqmail.com and I'll get right back with you.