

Protect your plants from the first frost

## Frost already?

Most gardens in North Dakota will suffer their first frost soon. The first frost (32°F) hits most of the state around September 20, but you never know when Jack Frost will strike.

Garden plants differ in their abilities to tolerate frost. The most sensitive vegetables include tomato, pepper, cucumber, and squash.


Root crops (carrots and radish) and vegetables in the cabbage family (broccoli and cauliflower) can tolerate light frosts. In fact, these veggies taste milder when harvested after light frosts.

The most sensitive flowers include geranium, impatiens, zinnia, portulaca, and coleus. These will be hard to save. You are better off bringing them inside or letting them freeze.

A few flowers can tolerate a light frost. These include petunia,



Also, consider layers of protection. Just like we use layers of clothes to keep ourselves warm, garden plants also benefit from layers of protection. A couple layers of blankets are better than one.

This protection may give you a couple extra weeks of gardening. But when a killing frost (28°F or below) is expected, nothing will save your sensitive plants. Run outside and harvest whatever you can! 

aster, cosmos, and marigold. These are worth protecting from the first frost.

So, what's the best way to protect our plants? That's easy. Pretend that YOU are a petunia in the garden. Petunias don't wear clothes, so pretend you are in your garden overnight, completely stark naked! All right, wipe that smile off your face and think seriously.

What would you wrap around yourself to keep warm? I would prefer a blanket or some burlap, and so would your plants. Some gardeners use newspaper—that's okay. Some use plastic—that's terrible! I wouldn't want a sheet of plastic wrapped around me on a cold night.

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