

What Do You Do When the Weather Is Weird?

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ma Alexander ([G_Alexander](#)) March 9, 2015

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ry year conforms to regular weather patterns. What do you do when the weather changes plans?

books are full of planting calendars and seasonal advice based on years of careful tion of the weather, but what do you do when the weather changes plans? Not every year s to regular patterns ñ in fact, weird weather is starting to be normal. More and more ardeners are finding themselves dealing with atypical scenarios.

With the Wind

ou're dealing with hurricanes, tornadoes, or a winter storm, high winds can affect rs anywhere. Fortunately, there is usually some warning before a wind storm, so rs have a chance to prepare.

hail is not always as predictable as wind, many of the same protective strategies apply. lanted trees should be staked to avoid uprooting. Stakes should be deep in the ground rely attached to the tree. If they are too tight, the tree could break. Hanging baskets, lants, and anything else that could catch the wind should be brought indoors or collected tered place.

ou probably don't want to be outside removing dead branches in the hours leading up to a big storm, keeping your garden ned as part of regular maintenance will help woody plants resist the wind. But be sure you know what you're doing; poor pruning s can actually make trees more vulnerable to breakage. After the storm, prune broken branches to salvage damaged plants. debris, especially organic matter, as soon as possible to avoid the spread of disease.

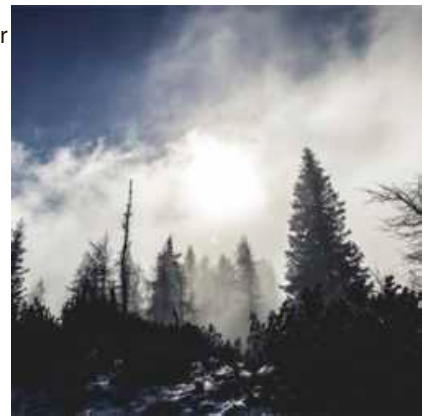
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rdy plants can be killed if the temperature drops too quickly. If freezing temperatures are predicted after a period of warmer or outside of the normal season, there are ways to help your plants survive.

he temperature drops, make sure the garden is well-watered and mulched. A thick layer of mulch over the roots can keep them azing. Some tender trees do benefit from having their trunks wrapped, but don't use mulch up against the stems, as that can burn

our plants before the temperature drops. You can use old sheets and thrift store blankets on large shrubs, and overturned plastic l buckets weighted with rocks on smaller plants. Even newspaper will help, if wind is not also predicted. You can buy special frost rom garden centers if you grow a lot of tender plants or experience frequent sudden temperature shifts (as in the mountains in t). If you use plastic sheeting, prop it up with stakes so that the plastic doesn't touch the plants directly. Plants will freeze at the i contact with the plastic. Even if freezing is forecast for several nights in a row, it is best to remove covers during the warmest part y to allow plants to receive light and fresh air. Just don't forget to replace the covers at sunset.

emperatures return to normal, don't be too quick to prune. Some stems and branches that may appear to have been killed will



while more permanent damage may not be visible immediately. Some plants may appear to be completely dead, only to regrow roots in spring.

ave

not much you can do for plants tricked out of dormancy by an early thaw, but you can resist the temptation to be tricked yourself. of warm, sunny weather in January is almost sure to be followed by a return to form, dooming new transplants and seedlings to an 7. Instead, use the time to do some mid-winter cleanup. If the warm weather is close to the average last frost date, it might be e risk to start spring planting; just hold off on planting anything you can't afford to lose, and hold a few starts in reserve in case d to start over.

/ave during the growing season can try more than a gardener's patience. Keeping plants watered is key to survival when the rises. In more humid climates, watering in the morning may help prevent disease from spreading on wet leaves. Even better, 3m below using soaker hoses. In the dry West, watering from below and watering at night is the most efficient way to get water to 3 where it's needed.

g thickly will also help keep plants from drying out and keep soil temperatures from rising too dramatically. In the desert st, plants from more temperate areas may benefit from shading during the middle of the day, when the sun can burn leaves.

ut

gs or hay bales can be used to direct running water away from prized plants, but if you're planning for floodwater, you will / be more concerned about directing water away from your house than the garden. Mulching can help keep heavy rain from iing the soil or and from washing the soil away. If you use an organic mulch, it will absorb a lot of water that would otherwise releasing it slowly in the days after the rain. After a heavy rainfall, it's even more important than usual to stay on the paths and 3pping into garden beds, as the saturated soil is even more susceptible to compaction than usual. You can try to dig furrows to inding water away from plants.

er what the weather throws at you, the best defense against weird weather is a healthy garden. Cultivate a healthy soil, use mulch, and keep plants properly pruned, and your garden will bounce back from all but the most extreme weather events.

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Here in the border zone of South-central Kansas the weather is always weird, so you just learn to adapt and work with it. I try to utilize plants that can handle a broad range of environmental conditions, so no matter what the weather throws at my gardens, the plants can take it.

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