



First Frost Prep Checklist

A fillable garden checklist to help protect plants before the first cold snap



Garden / Area:

Expected Frost Date:

Before Frost Arrives

- ☐ Check the weather and note the first expected frost date.
- ☐ Water dry soil deeply before the freeze, especially around new plantings.
- ☐ Move tender potted plants, tropicals, and houseplants indoors or under cover.
- ☐ Harvest remaining vegetables, herbs, and cut flowers you want to save.
- ☐ Gather frost cloth, old sheets, stakes, clips, buckets, or plant covers.

Protect Tender Plants

- ☐ Cover tender annuals, vegetables, and young perennials before sunset.
- ☐ Use stakes so fabric does not crush soft stems or blooms.
- ☐ Cover hydrangeas or young shrubs that are newly planted or frost-sensitive.
- ☐ Bring hanging baskets and small containers into a garage, shed, or porch.
- ☐ Remove covers the next morning once temperatures rise above freezing.

Clean Up and Prep Beds

- ☐ Pull weeds before they settle in for winter.
- ☐ Add mulch around shrubs and perennials, keeping it away from the crown or trunk.
- ☐ Cut back only plants that are diseased, damaged, or truly finished for the season.
- ☐ Leave seed heads or sturdy stems for birds and winter interest where helpful.
- ☐ Empty or turn over containers, saucers, and tools that could hold water.

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Containers, Tools, and Outdoor Water

- ☐ Drain garden hoses and disconnect them from spigots.
- ☐ Protect outdoor faucets if freezing temperatures are expected.
- ☐ Clean and store hand tools, sprayers, and watering cans.
- ☐ Move ceramic or terra cotta pots somewhere protected if they may crack.
- ☐ Check plant labels and make notes before frost damages foliage.

After the Frost

- ☐ Wait until the plant thaws before pruning or cutting damaged growth.
- ☐ Check containers first; potted plants dry out faster than plants in the ground.
- ☐ Remove collapsed annuals and add healthy material to compost if appropriate.
- ☐ Update your garden notes with what handled the cold well and what did not.
- ☐ Make a list of plants that need better placement or protection next year.

Plants I Need to Protect First

1.		Cover / Move / Mulch:	
2.		Cover / Move / Mulch:	
3.		Cover / Move / Mulch:	
4.		Cover / Move / Mulch:	
5.		Cover / Move / Mulch:	

Notes for next season: