

Cold Hardiness refers to a plant's ability to survive cold temperatures. Plants are generally classified according to the lowest temperature they can withstand without damage. Geographic regions are classified according to the average minimum temperature experienced in that area.

The USDA has separated the United States into 11 Hardiness Zone. Each zone is divided into sections A and B (where A is north and a little colder and B south and therefore warmer). The state of Florida covers zones 8 to 11.

Because of its unique shape, geography and location, Brevard County contains many different microclimates and covers three different USDA zones. Most of Brevard County is in Zone 9B. Part of northern Brevard borders on Zone 9A and Zone 10 conditions exist in the southern parts of our barrier islands. Always select plants rated hardy for your zone.

High Cold Tolerance

Plants in this category can with-stand most of the cold weather that comes to Brevard County. However, extreme cold such as temperatures in the low 20s could still be damaging to some plants in this group. Even within species there can be variation. For example, some avocado trees are damaged by freezing temperatures, some can withstand temps in the low to mid 20s, and others are safe into the low teens!

Medium Cold Tolerance

These plants can withstand temperatures in the high 20s for brief periods of time.

Low Cold Tolerance

These plants will not tolerate frost or freezing weather (31°F degrees and below).

Preparing for Cold Weather

Water your plants well the morning before an expected freeze. During the day, the water will absorb radiant heat from the sunlight to warm the plant's roots and keep it hydrated in the cold dry air. Cover plants with sheets, blankets—anything but plastic can be used. Light bulbs can also be used to provide heat as long as the plant is fully covered to the ground. Make sure the electric cords are designed for outside use.

Last but not least, spraying the foliage with **Maxicrop Liquid Seaweed** a month before the arrival of cold weather to increase cold protection by three to six degrees. To be fully effective, plants should be sprayed.

After a Freeze

Trim damaged or dead branches once the threat of frost has passed. Some exceptions include plumeria (frangipani) and crown of thorns. When badly damaged by cold, the tops of these branches sometimes develop a rot which, if not pruned right away, will kill the plant. Simply prune on a slant below the spongy part of the stem.

Palms should not be pruned until cold weather has passed, but they should be treated to prevent the development of fungal disease. Pour a small amount of **Liquid Copper Fungicide** into the heart of the palm until it dribbles over the side. Plants can overdose on copper, so do not treat them with copper more than two or three times in a year.

Healthy plants that have been fertilized well and watered properly fare the best against cold damage.

