

URBAN FARMER

LOVE THE EARTH

Learning about snow blankets

Gardeners always have a concern with the weather, whether the temperature is too hot or cold. Especially in the more northern states where the temperatures can dip extremely low, gardeners should learn about snow blankets and their added benefits to the garden, specifically perennial bulbs that may become damaged by subzero temperatures.

Gardeners should be aware that although it may appear that heavy snowfall can be damaging to the garden, the snow actually acts as an insulator for the bulbs buried well below the soil, coming in handy especially when temperatures drop shortly after a snowfall.

The snow acts as an insulator because when there is a foot or more of snow covering your perennial bed, the snow prevents the soil below to dip into the subzero temperatures, even if the temperatures outside are extremely cold. This can even be seen on shrubs and plants above ground — when the snow covers shrubs such as evergreens, a real cold blast can kill the uncovered plants. But for those that are covered, the snow will serve as an extra layer of protection.

However, since snow is a natural occurrence and gardeners cannot decide when they wish to protect their vegetables with snow alone and because subzero temperatures do not always bring snow, gardeners should take extra precaution in the fall or early winter to prevent subzero temperatures from ruining their perennials. Another completely natural way to protect the beds is by adding a protective layer of



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mulch or pine needles on top of the perennial beds before temperatures begin to get too cold. This imitates the snow blanket, and a protective layer of mulch will insulate the soil to protect the bulbs below. At any time during the winter where it appears the mulch has begun to rise, especially in more southern states where vegetables may be grown in the winter, this could mean the crowns of the plant are being lifted above the soil. If this happens, reapply the mulch at the base of the plant to try to prevent harm.

If you don't want to mulch and would rather go the snow route, when it snows you can take the snow from other areas in your yard like your driveway and mound it on top of the perennial beds. This will create an insulation layer deeper than nature intended. The most beneficial kind of snow to preserve perennial bulbs is deep, freshly fallen and fluffy snow. A snow cover also discourages the bulbs to begin to bloom on the rare warm days in winter that imitate spring.



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A fake snow cover can be purchased online to provide insulation if you're worried enough snow won't fall during the winter to protect your plants.

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