

## More weather woes for plants

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Last week I wrote about a few problems the weather has caused for annuals. This week, the unfortunate happened - frost and freezing temperatures.

In the Springfield area we dropped down to 30F on Monday morning and the skies were perfectly clear and there was no wind. These are perfect conditions for a freeze and boy did we get it.

Annuals that weren't protected (and even some that were) had significant damage. Some perennials and new growth on trees and shrubs had a little damage in my landscape as well.

However, since I am so far behind this spring, I hadn't planted any annual flowers or tender warm season vegetables and had very little damage.

On the other hand, our research annuals, despite the fact that they were covered and somewhat protected, had freeze damage.

Most of our plants just had leave damage and our volunteers spent the day Monday cutting them back. If we get some warmer weather, these will start to regrow and will be ok in the long run.

I am a little concerned about the long term forecast (more rain) because of potential for botrytis. These plants that were damaged are in perfect condition for botrytis to occur so keep your eyes open for the signs (fuzzy gray mold on plant tissue).

The worst case scenario from Monday's temperatures is that you have to replant. This stinks for sure.

The other challenge with this spring is trying to get plants in the ground. As I write this column, I am waiting for a rain shower to pass so that we can check the soil to see if we can get our research plants in the ground.

Holding them in the greenhouse for much longer will result in straggly leggy plants; they really need to go into the beds!

However, the worst thing we can do is to plant them when the soil is wet.

Working wet soil compacts it and makes it very challenging for roots to grow successfully.

On the other hand, we have planted in soils that are a little too moist and the plants still grew. There is a fine line when it comes to spring planting and soil moisture.

The green industry landscape contractors fight this every year. They know that they shouldn't plant in wet soil but on the other hand, the job has to be finished. A good contractor knows when not to cross that fine line.

Lawns are still continuing to grow and have entered the "seed formation" stage. Turfgrass goes into seed production in the spring and because grass is growing so fast, seeds show up sometimes before you get a chance to cut.

This is not a problem and is normal. Just keep cutting the grass as usual and the seed production stage will eventually end.