

Signs of spring showing already

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Gardeners are getting a little bit excited by this weather in more ways than one! The phone is ringing off the hook. Gardeners are concerned about the bulbs that have started peeking out of the soil and are wondering what to do.

The short answer is nothing! There is really nothing that can be done to prevent this from occurring. The weather dictates when and how plants grow and since we have had warm weather, well, you see the results.

People are understandably concerned about damage to their tulips, daffodils and other assorted bulbs.

Understand that the foliage of bulb plants is very tolerant of cold temperatures. The flowers are not as tolerant of freezing temperatures.

Damage to the foliage is dictated by temperature extremes. For instance, if we have several days of really warm temperatures and the plants start to grow, followed by a sudden drop overnight in temperatures, it's likely that the foliage will be damaged.

Tender growing vegetation is more likely to be damaged than the vegetation that has been exposed to consistent cold temperatures.

Flowers are more sensitive to cold than the foliage and won't tolerate a freeze when in bloom. If a freeze is predicted, I simply go out and cut a nice bouquet of fresh daffodils or tulips or whatever is in bloom.

Some suggest covering the green foliage that is peaking out. This will be useful if there is a sudden growth spurt followed by a drop in temperatures. However, covering will also keep the foliage under the mulch or leaves warmer, allowing them to continue to grow.

I tend to leave the foliage alone and let Mother Nature take care of them. If the foliage gets damaged, it might be a little yellow or brown, but the flowers end up coming up and blooming later. You can always cut off the dead foliage to improve appearance.

I am excited because the temperatures this weekend and the next few days will allow me to plant lettuce seeds in my raised bed gardens.

The seeds will sit in the soil and will germinate when soil temperatures are just right. I might have some lettuce early in the season and I might not but I am willing to take a chance! I really miss fresh vegetables.

In terms of starting seeds indoors, it's ok to go ahead and start those seeds that take a while to germinate and grow. Begonias and impatiens are started early in the season.

I wouldn't start tomatoes and peppers until March unless you have great light or a greenhouse to grow them in until you plant them outdoors. Starting them too early leads to leggy and overgrown plants.



Foliage of grape hyacinth was damaged by early cold snap but still bloomed nicely



Indoor seed starting season is fast approaching – be sure to have your supplies ready