

**COASTAL GARDENER**  
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**Author's Notes:** As of this writing, many areas of the Central Coast have experienced several nights of temperatures below 30° F, and many plants are now showing the “burn” effects of the frosts. These temperatures definitely mark the end of the season for frost-sensitive annuals like beans, squash, tomatoes and impatiens. These annuals can now be removed and placed in the compost pile.

The low temperatures also damaged many perennials that may or may not recover. If you have a favorite perennial that has been badly frosted and is now looking rather ugly, DO NOT prune it. The frosted canopy, even though it is dead, provides some protection for the leaves and twigs underneath. If you prune off the frosted canopy, the next frost will probably kill even more tissue. DO NOT prune to remove frost-damaged tissues until late February or March (check your frost-free dates). At that time you can definitely see what is still alive and can make your pruning cuts accordingly to reshape and retrain the part of the plant that has survived.

Also note, with these good frosts most plants have been pushed into full dormancy, so the year-end holidays are a good time to get going on fruit trees and roses and other plants that need an annual pruning.

Remember to apply your dormant clean-up sprays now and plant bare root trees, roses and other plants also. Our area has not received enough rain to wet the soil very deep, so these plants should be watered in after planting to settle the soil and collapse air pockets. Another word about planting: Make sure that the soil line on the plant you buy is at least one inch above grade after you have planted it in your landscape. In fact, many trees and shrubs grow better if you plant them on a slightly raised area, i.e., a berm or a mound. A berm or mound three to five inches above grade is not excessive. If you need to continue watering the plant for a time after planting, build a doughnut around the plant to retain the water. After the plant is established, the doughnut can be removed to create a level landscape. Bottom line, DO NOT plant your new plant in a hole!

I wish all my readers a very Merry Christmas and a productive and healthy 2007.

Send your landscape and garden questions to: **The Coastal Gardener, 624-A West Foster Road, Santa Maria, CA 93455.**