



Henderson County Master Gardeners Weekly News Article January 21, 2019

Will My Daffodils Freeze?

By Lydia Holley

Will your daffodils freeze when a cold snap comes along? Maybe, maybe not. It all depends on where your daffodil is in its development when freezing temperatures arrive. Let me explain.



When you first plant your bulb, or if they have been in the ground over summer, the cool, moist soil triggers the bulb into growing roots. This happens when the soil reaches around 60 degrees. It is at that time when something magical happens. It takes the energy stored in the bulb and changes those starches into something akin to glucose (but with some extra chemicals mixed in) which is what acts as an “antifreeze”. This is why you do not cut your daffodil foliage off after they have bloomed. You want the foliage to die naturally, which allows those starches to be stored in the bulb for next year.

If your bulb has not had time to transform these starches, your daffodil bulb may freeze. Most of the time, in East Texas, the soil cools at a slow enough rate that the bulbs do not freeze before roots are formed. The daffodil then begins to put on foliage. This is when most gardeners question if the late freezes will harm their emerging daffodils. Usually, the answer is no. The foliage has the same glucose “antifreeze” formula in its cells, which allows the foliage cells to expand instead of burst when the temperatures fall below freezing.

If your daffodil’s foliage gets broken, which would keep the cells from being able to expand correctly, it may turn brown. If enough of the foliage is damaged, you may lose the flowers for this year, but keep the foliage on the bulb and it should bloom again next year. If your daffodils are in bloom when a cold front arrives, the flowers will not be able to withstand freezing temperatures. If your daffodils are already blooming and a freeze is expected, cut them off and enjoy them indoors.

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