

Adam Watson, Agriculture Extension Agent [watson@utk.edu](mailto:watson@utk.edu)

## Upcoming Classes Offered Both In-Person & Zoom

*Please Preregister!*

### **January 19<sup>th</sup>-Home Fruit Pest Control 6:00pm-7:30pm**

Join Agriculture Agent Adam Watson to learn how to best protect your tree and small fruits from insects and disease. In-person location: Jonesborough Farm Bureau Basement Meeting room, 1103 Boonescreek Rd Jonesborough

**Register for In-Person:** [tiny.utk.edu/inpersonfruit](https://tiny.utk.edu/inpersonfruit) or call 753-1680

**Zoom Registration:** [tiny.utk.edu/homefruitpestcontrol](https://tiny.utk.edu/homefruitpestcontrol)

### **January 31<sup>st</sup>-Home Fruit Pruning 6:00pm-7:30pm**

Join Agriculture Agent Adam Watson to learn how to prune your fruit trees and small fruit to improve yields and enhance fruit quality. In-person location: Jonesborough Farm Bureau Basement Meeting room 1103 Boonescreek Rd Jonesborough.

**Register for In-Person:** [tiny.utk.edu/inpersonpruning](https://tiny.utk.edu/inpersonpruning) or call 753-1680

**Zoom Registration:** [tiny.utk.edu/fruitpruning](https://tiny.utk.edu/fruitpruning)

### **February 7<sup>th</sup>-Beginning Vegetable Gardening 6:00pm-7:30pm**

Join Agriculture Agent Adam Watson to learn about the best practices for vegetable garden to make the season great. In-person location: Jonesborough Farm Bureau Basement Meeting room, 1103 Boonescreek Rd Jonesborough.

**Register for In-Person:** [tiny.utk.edu/inpersonbeginveg](https://tiny.utk.edu/inpersonbeginveg) or call 753-1680

**Zoom Registration:** [tiny.utk.edu/beginveg](https://tiny.utk.edu/beginveg)

### **March 2<sup>nd</sup>-Having Fun with Seed Saving 6:00pm-7:30pm**

Join Agriculture Agent Adam Watson to learn how to successfully save seed in your home garden and landscape. In-person location: Jonesborough Farm Bureau Basement Meeting room, 1103 Boonescreek Rd Jonesborough.

**Register for In-Person:** [tiny.utk.edu/inpersonseed](https://tiny.utk.edu/inpersonseed) or call 753-1680

**Zoom Registration:** [tiny.utk.edu/seedsaving](https://tiny.utk.edu/seedsaving)



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[2023 Tennessee Home Vegetable and Fruit Garden Calendar](#)

## The Trusty Trowel-January 2023

### What About Our Extreme Temperatures?

Below you'll find a collaborative article written by a number of UT Specialists and agents. I encourage you to give it read. Locally on 12/23 the Tri-Cities Airport reported a 42 degree drop in temperature from 44°F at 2:30am to 2°F at 10:00pm. This mirrors what was seen across the state.

Temperature data: <https://www.wunderground.com/history/daily/us/tn/blountville/KTRI/date/2022-12-23>

### Handling the Holiday Freeze in your Lawn and Landscape

Natalie Bumgarner, Jim Brosnan, Amy Fulcher, Lucas Holman, Lee Rumble, Taylor Reeder, Celeste Scott, and Justin Stefanski



Photo credit left to right: Camellia leaf and flower winter injury-Natalie Bumgarner; Bronzing on conifers-Natalie Bumgarner; Tall fescue home lawn showing symptoms of winter injury- J. Brosnan

The recent holidays blew in with a winter storm that will not soon be forgotten. Here in Tennessee, we missed much of the snowfall that wreaked havoc across the Midwest and Northeast. However, wind and cold temperatures packed a punch for our power grids and landscapes over the Christmas weekend. Now we find ourselves starting 2023 with many questions about the extent of damage and next steps for our lawns and landscapes. Before we get to action steps, let's recap our recent freeze event.

The weather event presented itself as a 39°F drop in Memphis, from 44°F at 4 pm Dec. 22<sup>nd</sup> to 5°F at 12 am on Dec. 23<sup>rd</sup>. Nashville and Knoxville records show similar 40-degree plummets from the evening of the 22<sup>nd</sup> through the morning of the 23<sup>rd</sup>. This rapid drop was accompanied by gusty winds and sustained below 15°F for at least 32 hours. Shockingly, temperatures didn't rise above 32°F for more than 80 hours. Freeze damage in plants is largely the result of ice formation within the plant that punctures cell walls, and those temperatures across the state were certainly severe enough for this to occur. Additionally, the rapid drop meant plants were less able to implement internal defense measures to tolerate low temperature stress. Wind also contributed to desiccation (drying) that can injure plants.

Most warm-season turfgrasses, such as zoysiagrass and bermudagrass, had already transitioned into winter dormancy before this event, so signs of damage won't appear until warmer weather in the spring. Injury on cool-season turfgrasses is quite visible with leaves that are usually green having brown, necrotic (dead), tissue. Many conifers are now showing a golden or brown coloration, but we will not know the extent of the injury for a few more months. Low temperatures might have been especially harmful to zone 7 or 8 landscape plants, such as Acuba, Camellia, Distylium, Yaupon holly, Indian Hawthorn, Loropetalum, fig, and more. Close inspection of boxwood and azalea may reveal the bark is split, cracked, or peeling from the trunk. Because this disrupts the plant's ability to move water from the roots to the leaves, plants with this type of damage are not expected to recover quickly, if at all. Spring may reveal some woody species, such as crape myrtle, killed to the ground or

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warm-season grasses, tender perennials, and even “borderline” woody plants killed outright. The rapid change in temperature, magnitude of drop, and duration of lethal temperature exposure may end up being a triple whammy. Only time will tell the full extent of this winter weather event.

### What to do now?

April and May seem far away, and you are probably wondering what you can do now. First, be patient! The best action right now may actually be to do nothing. For herbaceous (non-woody) plants, those that are borderline for our area (hardy banana, calla, canna, and more) as well as plants that are often evergreen (hardy ferns, Heuchera, Lenten rose and more) may have been killed to the ground. **Leaving that now-dead aboveground tissue may provide a bit of insulation in the coming weeks for plants that survived. So, don't do extensive cleanup or mowing. You don't want to get carried away with pruning woody plants either.** Waiting until plants leaf out (or don't) in the spring will give you the best indication of what to prune. Be patient; plants like bigleaf hydrangea may not resume growth until as late as Mother's Day, and flower buds except those that develop on new growth were likely damaged by the cold temperatures. Plus, **pruning now could expose still-living tissue to further cold damage in the coming weeks.** If you are concerned about whether a plant is still alive, you can always perform a “scratch test”. This can be done by gently removing (scratching off) a small section of the bark on small stems/twigs to expose the cambium. Green tissue indicates a living stem. If the tissue is brown, then it is dead. Keep in mind that different plant tissues (leaves, buds, stems) on the same plant can vary in cold hardiness with roots being most sensitive to low temperatures. So, the impacts may differ due to plant tissue type, age, and health as well as location due to drainage, snow cover, air flow, and microclimates. Plants in containers on decks and patios will have more damage than those same plants in the ground because the roots are less insulated from the cold. Another practice that isn't helpful right now is fertilization. Whether dead or dormant, plants are not taking up many nutrients right now.

In the short term, make sure to manage any drainage issues to prevent waterlogging on lawns and landscapes that are already stressed. Likewise, monitor moisture levels to ensure that landscape plants, especially evergreens, don't dry out. For long-lived plants, the effects of such stress events may be variable and take a while to become evident. It is important to understand this and further reduce other stressors in the coming months as much as possible (manage pests, irrigate if needed, prune carefully). As the effects become clear, we'll either be relieved to see the return of old plant favorites or we'll get to select some exciting new plants for our lawns and landscapes. Either way, we invite you, as always, to connect with your local UT Extension office with questions and check out UThort.com for lawn, landscape, and garden resources.

Weather data source: <https://www.wunderground.com/history/daily/us/tn/louisville/KTYS/date/2022-12-23>



"Parsnips" by Mike Licht,  
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## An Underappreciated Root Vegetable

Marie Taylor, Master Gardener Intern

Fall and winter are the time to harvest the best tasting root vegetables, but it takes planning and planting in the spring to get there. For full flavor development, many are best harvested after the first heavy frosts. Parsnip roots may be left in place during the winter for use in the spring but in our region some winters may be too cold for the roots to survive the full winter in the ground.

Carrots, beets and turnips are commonly found root vegetables, but there are others that you can easily grow from seed. Parsnips are a favorite that can be easily grown in a home garden with a little planning and patience. This hardy root vegetable develops a sweet, nut-like flavor after it has been heavily

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frosted. Parsnips were once a common vegetable at the dinner table and they deserve to come back in style. In the 1800s parsnips were often used to make marmalade and wine. There are also wonderful recipes for parsnip pie and soups easily found online.

Parsnips require a sunny, well drained, friable soil with no stones. Overly fertile soil will cause the roots to fork, so raise them where you haven't dug in any compost or manure in the last year. And hold off adding fertilizer or mulching with compost. Mulching with clean straw is the best way to control weeds and maintain an evenly moist growing environment.

And for the patience part - parsnips can be notoriously slow to germinate. It is very important to use fresh seed; seed older than one year will not germinate well, if at all. Sow directly in the garden April 1<sup>st</sup> through June 1<sup>st</sup>. Parsnip seeds need a minimum of 8°C (46°F) to germinate, but even at this temperature they are liable to rot before they've had a chance to sprout. Seeds may take 2-3 weeks to germinate and soil must not dry out during this time. Radish seeds may be interplanted so that emerging seedlings will prevent soil crusting and mark the location. Plant 1/2 in. deep in prepared beds and thin to 4-6 in. each way, or plant in rows 18 in. apart with plants thinned to 4 in. A key to success is to plant the seeds thickly to account for poor germination; it's easy to weed out, or thin, extra seedlings.

If you really are an impatient sort, there is another nifty trick to try. Try "chitting" – or pre-sowing germination of parsnip seeds. Try pressing the seeds onto damp paper towels. Fold the paper towels and place them in a Ziplock bag in a cool place. After a week or two, little white roots will appear. Sow the pre-germinated seeds as above, carefully handling the seed to not damage the emerging root. Discard any that have failed.

**Looking at seed catalogs and racks, but can't decide? Take a look at our [Tennessee Home Garden Variety Trials report](#). It lists suggested varieties that have been trialed by TN gardeners and found to perform well.**



Check out our [YouTube channel @ https://tiny.utk.edu/washingtonvideos](#) for videos of previous gardening webinars.



For questions about your home and garden please feel free to contact me, Adam Watson, Agriculture Extension Agent [watson@utk.edu](mailto:watson@utk.edu) or by cell 423-430-6711. Emailing or texting pictures is a great way to get questions to me.

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