



PREPARING YOUR GARDEN

Plan ahead

Our first frost of the season may sneak up on us, so get a few things in order beforehand. One thing to consider is purchasing a frost cloth. If you plan to use bed sheets that is fine too. But go ahead and order your frost cloth now so you have it on hand when the forecast arises. Order a weight of at least 1.5oz. You can also plan how you will hold your cloths or sheets in place. The most important things to remember are to keep the cloth or sheets off of the leaves and make sure they are able to be kept snug to prevent any drafts. Some gardeners fashion hoops and PVC pipes for this purpose and one of our favorite techniques is the classic upside down bucket.

Warming Up

In most cases, you will have to remove the sheets and cloths once the sun comes up and the temperatures are warming up. Remember to water right away after a cold event. The stress can be surprisingly drying. We want enough light and moisture to get through to our plants as soon as possible. If you do have a light weight cloth make sure to reinforce it in an actual freeze, as well. This may seem like a lot for the Zone 9 gardener. But fear not! The garden club is always on full alert for all weather events and we walk each other through step by step.

Frost vs Freeze

Most of our cold season veggies are hardy to 28 degrees F. But the temperatures in our gardens near the soil can vary greatly from the temperatures near our house or what is being reported on the weather apps.

A frost cloth of 1.5oz or a reinforced bed sheet and tarp will protect veggies, fruit trees, flowers, and berries to 20 degrees. Any weight less than this and you are wasting money and time in a freeze. This weight will protect in a frost also, but the freeze protection makes this weight the one you want.

Learn more about frosts and freezes [HERE](#) in my free class *Understanding Frosts and Freezes*.

FIRST FROST TRADITIONS



Once your warm season veggies are removed ahead of the first frost of the year, there is nothing left to do in the wild child garden but wait! But, in true Wild Child fashion we even do that in style. First things first, you are going to need a delicious hot cocoa recipe. And no first frost is complete without Wild Child Community Manager, Lindsey Kennedy's grandfather's famous Hot Chocolate! He is 93 now and still makes this for the family when we are at the hunting camp together. Now it is a wild child staple!

Diddy's Hot Chocolate

5 cups milk
1/2 chocolate syrup
14 oz Eagle Brand sweetened condensed milk
1 cup mini marshmallows

Heat milk on stove over low heat. Add the Sweetened Condensed Milk, chocolate syrup, and marshmallows. Continue to heat on low while stirring. Pour in your favorite mug and drink by the fire.



Can you have a frost without having a fire? And can you have a fire without having s'mores? I think not! Even if you don't want to stand outside in the freezing temperatures to make s'mores, you can make s'mores right in your living room! Of course you can run to the grocery store and grab the ingredients, but how much fun would it be to make your own marshmallows? Give this recipe a try next time you are stuck inside during a freeze. Stock up on your ingredients now, and you will have what you need to create this fun tradition on that first frosty night of the year.

HOMEMADE MARSHMALLOWS

Ingredients:

- 3 envelopes of Knox gelatin
- 1/2 cup cold water
- 2 cups granulated sugar
- 2/3 cups corn syrup
- 1/4 cup water
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract
- Powdered sugar for dredging
- cooking oil

Directions:

Line your baking sheet with parchment paper. Get out your electric mixer and the bowl of your stand mixer. Set it up with the whisk attachment. In the bowl of an electric mixer add in the cold water. Then sprinkle gelatin on top of the cold water. Let the gelatin sit and soak for 10 minutes. In a small saucepan, combine sugar, corn syrup, and 1/4 cup water and heat over medium heat. Bring the mixture to a boil and let it boil for 1 minute. Once the sugar syrup mixture is done, pour the boiling sugar syrup into the gelatin mixture in your electric mixer. Turn the mixer speed to high speed and carefully add in the salt. Allow the mixture to beat on high speed for 12 minutes. After 12 minutes add in the vanilla extract and turn the mixer to medium-low speed and mix just to incorporate it into the mixture. Use a spatula to spread a little bit of cooking oil onto the parchment paper and you will want to add some to the side of the pan you are using. This will prevent the marshmallow mixture from sticking to it. Rub the rubber spatula again with oil and pour the marshmallow mixture onto the sheet pan lined with parchment paper and spread evenly. Scrap any of the mixture out of the mixing bowl. Get another piece of parchment paper and spread oil on one side, then place the oil side down on top of the marshmallow mixture. Let the marshmallow mixture sit for at least 2 hours. You want the marshmallows to firm up, depending on the temperature in your house it might take a little longer for the marshmallows to set. Remove the homemade marshmallow slab from the pan. Dredge (which means to cover the whole thing) the marshmallow slab with confectioners' sugar. You only want a light coating of confectioners' sugar on the top of them. Cut marshmallows into equal pieces with a pizza wheel or a large sharp knife, you can make them any size you want to. Dredge each piece of marshmallow in powdered sugar again lightly.

We say it all the time in the Garden Club, "If it doesn't bring you joy it has got to go!" And the same thing applies here. If making your own hot chocolate and marshmallows doesn't give you joy, then you buy instant cocoa and pre-made marshmallows from the store, and you'll snuggle up on your couch with your family and enjoy every minute of it! I think the most Wild Child thing of all, is cherishing every minute we have with those that we love.

Pro Tip: Instant cocoa tastes amazing in a fancy mug!



"TO FEEL SAFE
AND WARM ON A
COLD WET NIGHT,
ALL YOU REALLY
NEED IS SOUP."
LAURIE COLWIN

STOVE TOP STAPLES

What a Wild Child has simmering on her stove top during the winter months speaks so much about our values and what we deem important.

Whether a soup or a simmer pot, something on the stove is a symbol of comfort and joy. Isn't that what this season is all about?

During cold winter months, a Wild Child is always simmering something on top of her stove. Comfort, warmth, and nourishment can all be found in the recipes we have included in this article. Look through what we've shared for some inspiration and a few simple variations on the classics.

VEGETABLE SOUP

- Start with ground turkey, a beef roast, or fresh venison and brown completely in a large pot. Add diced onions and garlic, along with any favorite spices like chili powders and pepper.
- Next add some stock and canned tomatoes. Throw in beans, chick peas, kale, green beans, corn, carrots and Brussels sprouts fresh from the garden, and salt to taste. Bring to a boil.
- Let cook for several hours on simmer and about an hour before serving add potatoes and green onions. This will allow the potatoes to soften before serving.



STOVE TOP STAPLES

If soup is not on your menu, consider a simmer pot or cider to experience the aroma of the season all through the house.

1 MINUTE SIMMER POT

Simply peel from 1 or 2 oranges, add 2 cinnamon sticks, 1 tsp whole cloves, a couple fresh sprigs of rosemary, and cranberries (just add enough for color – these don't add any scent, but they sure make it gorgeous!)

Pour water into the saucepan – just enough to cover the ingredients, and simmer on low heat all day long. You'll start noticing a scent within about 15 minutes. Be sure to check your pot every 2-3 hours to see if you need to add more water. You can use your simmer pot for up to 2-3 days just by continuing to add water.

WILD CHILD AUTUMN CIDER

In a large stock pot, add 10-12 medium apples and 2 oranges, quartered. Add 4 cinnamon sticks, 1 tablespoon whole cloves, 1 teaspoon whole allspice, 1 whole nutmeg, and 1 inch fresh ginger. Cover with 16 cups water, more or less to cover and turn fire to high heat.



Heat over high heat until contents reach a slow simmer. Then reduce heat to medium-low, cover and simmer for about 2 hours, or until the apples are completely soft.

Using a potato masher or a wooden spoon, mash all of the apples and oranges against the side of the stockpot to release more of their flavors. Then cover and simmer for 1 more hour. Then using a fine-mesh strainer strain out all of the solids (apples, oranges, spices), pressing them against the strainer to release all of their juices. Discard the solids.

Stir in your desired amount of sweetener, to taste and serve warm. Add beauty to your cider by adding some apple slices, dehydrated fruit slices, or cinnamon sticks to every glass.



KATHY MATHERNE'S PUMPKIN CHILI

INGREDIENTS

- 1 large pumpkin
- 2 large onions
- 1/4 cup olive oil
- 2 carrots, sliced thin
- 1 zucchini, sliced thin
- 1 bell pepper, chopped
- 3 lbs. ground beef
- 1 tbsp. cumin
- 2 tbsp. smoked paprika
- 3 tbsp. chili powder
- 1 tbsp. oregano
- 1 pinch red pepper flakes
- 1 small can tomato sauce
- 2 cups beef broth
- 3 tbsp. apple cider vinegar
- 2 cans kidney beans

DIRECTIONS

Clean pumpkin and remove all seeds. Saute ground beef until browned. Then add veggies and saute until soft. Add remaining ingredients and stir to combine. Add additional broth if needed.

Fill pumpkin with chili ingredients and bake on 350 until pumpkin is soft. Depending on size of pumpkin it could take up to 3 hours.

Top with your favorite chili toppings and serve with yummy bread.