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## UNH Cooperative Extension Info Line Question of the Week

### Overwintering Pots

Q. I bought a lot of perennials and shrubs at fall sales. I'm worried that I won't have time to plant them before winter. What should I do?

A. Fortunately for you, it's easy to protect those plants. Plants grown in containers are exposed to colder temperatures than plants in the ground and the roots won't tolerate cold winter temperatures. How successful you will be overwintering plants outside in containers will depend on your ability to insulate the roots. The simplest method is to bury the pots in the ground.

The easiest way to do this is to dig a trench in your vegetable garden. Dig the trench as deep as the tallest pot and then group the pots in the trench. Cover the pots with several inches of leaves for added protection. In the spring, simply pull up the pots and clean them off.

No time to dig? In a pinch you can bury pots in a compost pile. However, the insulation value won't be as good, and you may lose a few plants. Or you can simply group pots together and cover them first with a layer of clear poly, then 6" - 12" of straw, and then a layer of white poly. Plants should be completely hardened off or dormant before being covered. Plants begin the dormancy process by responding to the shorter days of autumn. Exposure to frosts and cold temperatures completes the process. A good rule of thumb is to cover plants by Thanksgiving, and uncover them in the spring after snowmelt.

No matter which method you use, be sure to water pots well beforehand.

**Got questions? UNH Cooperative Extension Education Center's Info Line offers practical help finding answers for your lawn and garden questions. Call toll free at 1-877-398-4769, M-F, 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., or e-mail us at [answers@unh.edu](mailto:answers@unh.edu)**