



Brrrrrr, It's Cold Outside  
By Barbara Schuchart  
UCCE Master Gardener of El Dorado County

Some plants can tolerate colder temperatures than others. These plants can go into the ground as soon as the soil can be worked. They can take air temperatures in the 35 to 55 degree range. Many can put down roots early in the cooler conditions so they can be ready for the hot summer. If you're planting seeds, though, they may not germinate until the air temperature is above 40 degrees. Some plants can be grown in containers during the cool season and later moved to a warmer, protected area as needed.

What are these special plants that can take cold better than others? There is a long list, but just a few will be mentioned in this article. Get started now on your own cooler weather garden.

Sweet peas (*Lathyrus odoratus*) is a plant that can tolerate some frost, and will die when night temperatures get over 70 degrees. They are annuals that can be found in many different colors, and grow three to eight feet tall. Once the flowers begin blooming, pick the blooms often. They like to climb, so a trellis will be needed. They can also be planted indoors under lights, or in peat pots to mid-March.

Bachelor Buttons (*Centaurea cyanus*) can also be grown in late spring or early summer. Their blue and white flowers can tolerate frost, and oftentimes return in the fall.

The pansy (*Viola x wittrockiana*) is a perennial flower loved by many. It comes in a rainbow of colors and can tolerate frost. If you snip the spent flowers, it will prolong the blooming season. Pansies can grow in the fall, winter, and spring. They only grow four-to eight inches tall, making them an ideal border or container plant.

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Dianthus (*Dianthus caryophyllus*) is a perennial that grows from spring to mid-summer. They tolerate frost, but hardiness varies with species. They can grow from three inches to 24 inches and come in pink, red, white, and yellow colors. They also have a strong, spicy, clove-like scent.

Crocus flowers are between three and four inches high, and are bulbs. They can bloom in late winter to early spring and have lightly fragrant, lilac-blue flowers.

Snow drops (*Galanthus nivalis*) are also bulbs. They produce white flowers from four to nine inches tall, and grow in late winter into early spring.

Hellebore is a beautiful perennial that can grow in the winter to spring time. It grows from 18 to 21 inches tall and has evergreen foliage with flowers that are shaped like cups or bells.

Other choices for winter or early spring color are English daisies, cyclamen, calendula, alyssum, and nemesia.

Some other tips: if your plant comes from a greenhouse or an inside pot, wait to plant it outside until warmer spring days. Set tender plants or seedlings outside in the sun a few hours before planting in the ground, and be sure to remember to bring them inside at night. If they are planted outside and the temperature falls to below 30 degrees, cover them at night and remember to take the cover off during the day.

Have fun and enjoy some cool weather flowers and plants, even if it's a little cold outside!

There is no Master Gardener public education class this Saturday. UCCE Master Gardeners are available to answer home gardening questions Tuesday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to noon, by calling (530) 621-5512. Walk-ins are welcome at our office, located at 311 Fair Lane in Placerville. For more information about our public education classes and activities, go to our UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County website at <http://ucanr.edu/edmg>. Sign up to receive our online notices and e-newsletter at <http://ucanr.edu/mgenews/>. You can also find us on Facebook.