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Light-up Your Plants

Like I tell most northern transplants we have four seasons in S.C., almost summer, summer, still summer and Christmas. In S.C. we put Christmas lights on about anything that doesn't move, even old cars on blocks and Bubba if he gets any lazier.

We'll believe it or not those same Christmas lights can benefit your plants, also. In this part of S.C., it is called a transition zone. It is too hot to grow many plants but also when the temperature drops it gets too cold for other plants. Tropical, semi-tropical, and flowering plants just can't take our cold snaps. They need some type of protection during our extremes but do fine during the rest of our year. One of the easiest ways I have found to protect these sensitive plants is to toss a few strands of Christmas lights into the plants, cover them with a cloth or plastic sheet and turn them on when it gets cold. These small incandescent lights give off a small amount of heat and the cover holds in that heat and prevents damage to the plants and flowers.

Many folks, including myself, like to grow untypical plants in fact over two hundred folks just attended the Southeastern Citrus Expo at Cypress Gardens in Monks Corner. One of the main topics on the agenda was controlling cold damage. However, last year even the more typical plants like Oleander, Saga and Palmetto palms and Pittosporium had terrible cold damage in our area. Also, it will only be a few months until fruit trees are flowering. Our springs are like a wild rollercoaster ride. The temperature can drop out the bottom at anytime. Without some type of protection you will only average a good crop of peaches, plums, apples and etc. about two out of five years.

To learn more about gardening and country living watch both of our Emmy Award winning T.V. programs, Making-It-Grow (MIG) and Down Home with Tony and Amanda. MIG can be seen at 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday nights on regular ETV. However, at present Down Home can only be seen on digital cable and some satellite systems on the SC Channel (channel 802 on Time Warner Cable). The Clemson University Cooperative Extension Service offers its programs to people of all ages, regardless of race, color, gender, religion, national origin, disability, political belief, sexual orientation, marital or family status and is an equal opportunity employer