



With weather forecasters warning that the UK may suffer from the coldest Winter in decades the Royal Horticultural Society is advising gardeners to get prepared.

“Admittedly it is difficult to predict the long term weather forecast but when it comes to gardening there’s no harm in preparing for the worst and now is the time to do it,” says RHS Horticultural Advisor Nicola Bristow. “A little planning and preparation will help ensure plants survive the deepest snowfall or hardest of frosts. Believe it or not cold Winters can actually be good for gardens as warm Winters may prevent the protective deep dormancy in many trees and shrubs. If this happens it increases their susceptibility to later frosts and scorch caused by cold winds.”

The RHS is suggesting five key things to do. Their first suggestion is to put protective wrapping around vulnerable plants. A wide variety of wrapping material can be used such as horticultural fleece or bubble wrap.

Mulching plants with compost in October or early November is important as this natural covering will help prevent soil compaction and erosion that usually follows heavy rain.

Containers need to be kept in dry, sheltered areas and if at all possible moved against walls or fences. Grouping them together helps give additional protection. Protection from wind is important and now is a good time to plant hedges and trees. However for immediate and additional protection woven hurdles and netting can also be used.

The fifth and final suggestion from the RHS is to use plant-friendly de-icing products on icy

paths. The charity warns against the use of salt as this can burn plant leaves.

“If your favourite plant gets damaged over the Winter don’t give up on it too soon,” says Nicola. “We have found lots of plants in our gardens that looked totally dead in the Spring but suddenly burst into leaf and grew happily over the Summer. If it is a special plant it is worth waiting that little bit longer to see if new growth appears.”

Further hints and advice on how to protect plants and prepare for Winter are available to gardeners of all abilities when they join the RHS. The charity’s Advisory Service responds to over 70,000 member enquiries every year. Gift memberships are available for those looking for that special Christmas gift for their gardening friends and family.