



Winter Bed – *Wintering over your trees without a greenhouse*

This document is being provided as an example method of wintering-over potted plants through harsh weather when a greenhouse is not available.

For anyone interested, this is what our family does to winter-over our potted miniature trees (or any other potted outdoor plants), since we don't have a greenhouse (in our high-desert climate). Because they are potted, the roots must be protected from the cold, cold winter weather, but still be put through the dormant cycle to stay healthy.

Timeframe: The best time to bed down your trees is sometime after the irrigation water is turned off, first 2 weeks in October, and toward the end of the month, as chances of frost increase (1 - 31 October). If the weather stays warm, you could wait until mid-November; but, if you do, *remember that your trees are in danger, not only from early frost (watch for frost-warnings), but also from squirrels that will dig into the roots of your potted trees to bury nuts for winter – oftentimes completely up-rooting small trees and saplings!* Squirrels usually begin storing nuts toward the end of October to the beginning of November - as leaves begin to fall hard. This is just a guideline; each year and climate is different.

Figure 1: Example of winter bed, dug about 1 foot below the surface, and prepared for packing plants:



We use the veggie garden (since we don't grow veggies in winter), dig about a foot below the surface, surround with a straw-bale wall to protect against the bitter-dry-cold winds, pack plants as tight as possible, and back-fill with dirt in-between and throughout, up to the rims of the pots.

Before packing the plants in their winter bed, we wrap the nice pots with weed-barrier cloth to help clean-up in the spring. For regular nursery pots, we do without the weed-barrier cloth, and just wash and brush them down clean in the spring.

Figure 2: Example of first potted tree, wrapped in weed-barrier, set in bed, and backfilled with dirt:



For even more protection, you can add leaves around the base of the stock, but I haven't really needed to add that personally - they usually do pretty well in this condition. Occasionally, I will still lose 1-2 that may have been suffering before winter came anyway.

Figure 3: Pack the plants in tight, and backfill with dirt:



I also add hardware cloth to enclose the whole thing - this is very important to keep out mischievous critters, like cats, but especially squirrels!

Figure 4: Example of a Finished Winter Bed:



Don't forget to check on the bed occasionally and moisten if it gets too dry – but, never water too early or too late in the day (don't want that water to freeze the roots). Wait until late February / early March to begin breaking out your trees for spring. Watch for late-frost warnings, when you might want to place them back in temporarily (without backfilling again with dirt). Cheers all! And, stay warm!

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