



ASK A MASTER GARDENER

TUNE UP YOUR PIPES FOR WINTER

By Barbara Leatham, Placer County Master Gardener

Q Although climate change is bringing higher worldwide temperatures, I know that we are still experiencing hard freezes here. Is there anything I can do now to prepare my home?

A Even though temperatures haven't approached freezing yet, it's important to protect your home now to prevent freeze damage and costly repairs.

- Turn off your sprinkler system and drain the pipes. October through April is the rainy season in Northern California, so there shouldn't be a need to water your lawn this winter. By draining the pipes you prevent cracks or bursts underground that can be difficult to find and repair.
- Drain your garden hoses and store them inside to prevent cracking.
- Wrap outside pipes with insulation or heat tape.
- Make sure outside faucets aren't leaking.
- Find your main water shut-off valve so that you can quickly turn off the water to your home in an emergency. This is usually next to the house where the main water line comes in. Remember, water expands when it freezes and even a small crack in a pipe can lose more than 250 gallons a day.
- Your water heater works overtime during the winter months, so consider flushing the tank to remove sediment that can shorten its life and reduce heating efficiency.
- If you plan on being away from your home for an extended period, turn off the water into your home and consider hiring a plumber to flush your pipes.

Taking the time to prepare your home for freezing temperatures can save you time and money down the road. The Master Gardeners would like to remind all readers that conserving water is everyone's responsibility. Water is a limited resource and we need to use it wisely. To learn about how you can conserve water contact your local water district for tips, programs, rebates, and services available to you. You don't have to count every drop, but please make every drop count.

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