



SPRING| Sun Garden Sweaters: Keeping Your Plants Cozy

Summary:

In early spring and early fall, depending on where your garden is located, your plants may develop a bit of a chill. Frost can be very damaging to plants, cutting off their growth and blackening their leaves. But we can help them!

Before Visiting the Garden:

Gather: As many empty one-gallon milk jugs with lids as you can find, scissors, and art supplies if you want to decorate your containers

Explore: The weather section in your local newspaper or online. Can you find the coldest days of the next week?

Read: *The Huey's in the New Sweater* by Oliver Jeffers

In the Garden:

When the temperature gets below 32 degrees Fahrenheit, the freezing point of water, the water in the air (humidity) begins to freeze. This can create icy patterns on our windows, color our grass white, and do some serious damage to our fragile plants.

Questions to Explore:

- How do you stay warm when it gets cold?
- Do you think plants have ways of staying warm when it gets cold?
- What time of the year does it seem to be coldest in the garden?
- Do you think cold weather is harder on baby plants or on grown up plants?

Activity:

Cold weather is hard on plants no matter how big or small they are. On a small plant just trying to start growing, the frost can kill the plant. On a more mature plant that is almost ready to harvest, frost can ruin the flower or vegetable that the plant worked so hard to produce. A simple way to help keep our plants warm is to give them plant sweaters made out of recycled milk cartons.

1. The first step is to wash out all the old milk from the milk jugs.
2. Cut off the bottoms of the containers but leave the lids on top!
3. Gently place the carton over the top of your plant, making sure to lightly tuck in any stray leaves. Push the carton into the dirt so that it won't blow over in the wind. Now you have a protected plant!

Beyond the Garden | And Back Again...

During the spring and fall, when days can swing between very cool at night and very warm during the day, you will need to keep a close eye on your plants so they do not overheat once the chill of the evening passes. Check your local weather and on the days that it will be warm again, return to the garden to remove your milk carton sweater. Plants, just like human beings, can get a little overheated if they're wearing too many layers!

Continue Exploring | Supporting Materials

Farmers Almanac for all kinds of weather fun: <http://www.almanac.com/>

Kids info from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration: <http://oceanservice.noaa.gov/kids/>