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**NURSERY, GARDEN CENTER, GREENHOUSE & PATIO**

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PERENNIALS, TREES OR SHRUBS IN CONTAINERS

**Understand this is not a practice for longevity, however with a few extra steps for winter protection, it is possible. Keep in mind, this will also VOID the warranty offered on Echter’s trees and shrubs.**

Plants in pots face a different set of challenges heading into winter. As plants approach dormancy, air temperature and soil temperature are both cooling down. In the ground, a plants’ root system is insulated by the surrounding soil, maintaining a more consistently cold temperature, even as air temperatures fluctuate throughout winter. A plant in a pot will experience those fluctuations much more so, as the root system is not insulated by the surrounding ground soil. With the drastic ups and downs we face in our winters, it can be very stressful for a plant with an exposed or uninsulated root system. In many cases, it is these fluctuations that will cause the demise of many “hardy” potted plants. Our goal in overwintering containerized plants is to keep them consistently cool and dormant.

Some pots/materials are more suited for overwintering

* DRAINAGE is a must, allowing excess water to exit the bottom of the pot.
* Wood or plastic can “flex” with the freeze/thaw action of the rootball throughout winter.
* Ceramic or terra cotta can crack or split when the rootball freezes and expands, or if water droplets get into the material itself.
* Metal can be a good choice, although it can heat up quite a bit when in direct sun through winter, potentially interrupting dormancy

Here are a few ways we can help them through the winter:

* Bury the pots into the ground, as if they were planted, and dig them up in the springtime.
* Huddle pots together in a tight grouping along the north side of house/garage/shed etc., smallest pots closest to wall and larger pots on the outside.
* Bring pots into an uninsulated/unheated garage or shed, not the home.
* Place pots into oversized pots and fill excess space with mulch/straw/burlap.
* Heave mulch up and around the pots.
* WATER – these potted plants will NEED periodic watering throughout winter, 1-2x a month

The other option is to change out our containers seasonally. Use annuals or vegetables through spring and summer; then switch out for fall plants like mums, cabbages and pansies in autumn; as temperatures cool and Christmas approaches, use fresh cut evergreen boughs pushed into damp soil to create lasting arrangements through winter.