

Wally's Weekly News 3rd APRIL 2010
Written by Wally Richards.

FROSTS AND WEEDS

The first frosts are likely to strike at any time in frost prone areas. Some of you may have already had a frost or two so far.

There are a few things you can do to offset damage to frost sensitive plants and assist cropping plants to keep on going a bit longer for better returns.

First of all you can spray sensitive plants with **Vaporgard** which is very simple to use; mix 15 mls per litre of warm water and then spray over plants for a good coverage.

Vaporgard is organic and it provides a long lasting (2-3 months, longer in winter) film over the foliage which protects down to 3 degrees C.

New growth requires further applications but as there is very little growth through winter, this is not needed till the spring.

Note; for the full protection that **Vaporgard** can give against frost and chill damage takes about 3 days to come into effect.

Putting on frost cloth and taking it off is a chore and more often or not, one either forgets or you get caught out. **Vaporgard** overcomes these problems and becomes an all winter, first line of defense against the chills.

In areas where you have harder frosts than 3 you will still need the extra protection such as the traditional frost cloth (Good quality frost cloth protects down to 5), combine the two together and you will have increased protection. Note, several frosts in a row will result in damage still.

You can further harden up plants by sprinkling potash over the area where the roots of plants are.

This can be combined with magnesium to keep foliage green through the winter.

The two are found together in the product, **Fruit and Flower Power**.

Weeds taken care of now, before they reseed, will reduce problems in the coming spring.

Though I am not a fan of chemical weed killers sometimes they are the quick and easy way to control the more difficult weeds.

A few gardeners recently have complained about suckers coming up over their gardens after a tree has been felled.

Some trees are really bad about suckering and the roots will send up saplings to keep themselves alive.

The first answer to the problem in prevention is to ring bark a tree first, that you intend to fell.

This allows both the top and the roots to die and once that has happened then you can cut down the tree.

It does not always work and if suckers start to appear from the old root system then my suggestion is to mix Roundup and Woodyweed killer together with **Raingard** added and paint this onto every sucker that appears. It may take sometime but in the end you should win.

Oxalis is a bulb that throws up a set of leaves, gains energy from the sun and produces hundreds of bulblets or baby bulbs. If you take a heaped tablespoon of baking soda and add it to a litre of warm water, stir to dissolve, then add one mil of **Raingard**, you have made a potent dehydrator of oxalis foliage which does not harm other types of plants. If

you spray this formula over the oxalis foliage on a sunny day when the ground is on the dry side the leaves of the oxalis will shrivel and die.

It has not killed the bulb which will then produce another set of leaves. As soon as these appear you either apply the same solution or cut them off at ground level. If done quickly enough at the emergence of the new leaves the bulb has not gained energy but has weakened instead. Again it will try to produce leaves which should be quickly removed. At some point of time the bulb does not have any more energy left to produce foliage and it rots in the soil. Goodbye oxalis.

There is a further aspect to the oxalis problem and that is all the baby bulbs attached to the now dead parent, if you disturb the soil you will bring these babies nearer to the surface where they will also produce leaves to start the cycle over again. What you do instead is cover the soil with a layer of compost and plant any new seedlings into this layer. This action further buries your oxalis problem.

Do not disturb the soil and when your flowers or vegetables are finished or harvested, just cut them off at ground level and cover the area with more compost. Simple and effective. Wandering jew. Go to a grocery wholesaler such as Toops and buy a 25 kilo bag of table salt, which will cost you between \$10 to \$15.00. Broadcast the salt over the area where the wandering jew is growing, its cheap, so throw it on. You will find that the weed dies off leaving bare ground. Some new emergence will then occur and you spot treat these with a handful of salt. Later rake the area to remove the stubble and then you can lime the area and apply **Magic Botanic Liquid** to bring the soil back for planting up in a preferred plant.

If you have other plants growing in the area they will likely die also but well established trees and shrubs should not be unduly affected. Now \$15.00 worth of salt goes a long way and is cheaper than a little bottle of chemical weedkiller for \$30 which does not go far.

If you have pavers and weeds grow in the cracks just sprinkle some of your salt.

Another one is sulphate of ammonia which also burns out weeds. I have used this on low weeds growing in a gravel drive. Sprinkled the sulphate of ammonia over them and they brown off and die. Ideally you should lightly water the weeds about an hour prior to applying the sulphate of ammonia so there is a little moisture to start the burning action. The advantage of sulphate of ammonia is a short residue period, unlike table salt which is much longer.

In your kitchen you already have a couple of neat, environmentally friendly weed killers, vinegar and cooking oil. These can be sprayed over the foliage of weeds on a sunny day when the ground is on the dry side to burn off the weeds. Add dish washing soap to the oil so it mixes with the water.

Dependant on the type of weed you can dilute either of the two products with water to make them go further and be more economical. You need to experiment a bit to find out what dilution rate works best for each type of weed.

Once again buying either a cheap cooking oil or vinegar in bulk, works out very economically on the purse and you are doing far less damage to the environment or your own personal health.

Problems ring me at 0800 466464 (Palmerston North 3570606)