

Wildflower Report
9th District FGCMYS
March 13, 2017

The Benefits of Snow in the Garden

Dear Madame Director,

As we await another March snowstorm, I choose to espouse the benefits of snow in the garden. A "Blanket of Snow" describes well the excellent insulator of a snow cover beyond the visual description. Freshly fallen, un-compacted snow is typically 90-95% trapped air. Because this air can barely move, heat transfer is greatly reduced, thus slowing the flow of heat from the warm ground to the cold air above.

This insulation effect helps prevent deep soil freeze that can damage root systems and protects perennials, bulbs and ground covers from alternating freezing and thawing cycles. Without snow, the sun and milder temperatures could warm soil surfaces leading to damage from soil heaving, which can break roots and dry out plant parts.

Snow helps conserve soil moisture over the winter and contains plant-beneficial nutrients, mostly nitrogen, which is bound up more than the corresponding amount of rain. Snow is a slow-release moisture source soaking more deeply and thoroughly than rain that will run-off after saturation.

Certain organisms become more active under snow breaking down plant litter making more nutrients available for spring plant growth - the miracle sleeping beneath.

Respectfully submitted,
Leah Waybright Kennell
Wildflower Chairman
9th District FGCMYS