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Plant Dormancy

Today on Gardening in a Minute: plant dormancy.

As winter approaches, short days and cool temperatures cause many plants to slow down and enter a suspended growth phase known as dormancy. Drought and other environmental stresses may also cause plants to go dormant.

Plant dormancy is similar to the way bears hibernate during the winter.

While dormant, plant growth slows or stops. Plants may turn brown or even drop their leaves altogether. For example, St. Augustine lawns will often turn brown after a hard freeze.

The dead tissue might be ugly, but patience pays. Pruning will promote new growth, so wait until near or after the last freeze date before you cut anything back.

Think twice before you send that brown plant to the compost heap--it may just be waiting to wake up from a long winter's nap!

For more information about plant dormancy and many other gardening topics, contact your county Extension office or visit Gardening in a Minute dot com.

Gardening in a Minute is a production of the University of Florida's Center for Landscape Conservation and Ecology, IFAS Extension, and WUFT-FM.

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