

## Keep Snow Molds From Damaging Turf This Winter



Pink snow mold (*Microdochium nivale*) on turf.

Snow molds can occur on most types of turf grown in Nebraska and can cause widespread harm to lawns. Evidence of the mold appears as discolorations when the snow melts away from infected turf, leaving it brittle, matted and spotty. Protect valuable turf from snow mold damage by taking action before and during the winter.

While the fine-leaved turf types, such as those on golf greens, are seriously injured more often than coarser lawn grasses, certain conditions can make snow molds a bigger problem, says John Watkins, Ph.D., plant pathologist. If a heavy snow comes before the ground freezes, and the snow sticks around for several weeks, it can create prime conditions for snow mold growth on lawns as well.

Steps to prevent snow mold include:

- Fertilizing cool season grasses in late fall—after the last mowing—with a slow-release nitrogen carrier.
- Continuing to mow in the fall until all leaf growth stops.
- Reducing thatch with aeration, vertical mowing, power raking or a combination of these practices.
- Preventing large drifts of snow on important turf areas by proper placement of snow fences or landscape plantings.
- Preventing snow compaction by restricting travel—walking, snowmobiling, skiing or sledging—on important turfs.
- Repairing snow mold damage by raking the affected patches in early spring to disrupt the encrusted mat and by lightly fertilizing to encourage new growth.
- Using a preventative fungicide program on high-value turf and on areas where snow molds cause injury year after year. Make the initial fungicide application in early to mid-November and repeat applications as needed during mid-winter thaws in January, February and March. Late-season applications in late March or early April usually aren't effective.

## How to Handle Food if Power Goes Off

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If your power has gone off, how should you handle food in your refrigerator and freezer? Knowing how to determine if food is safe and how to keep food safe will help minimize the potential loss of food and reduce the risk of foodborne illness.

- Meat, poultry, fish and eggs should be refrigerated at or below 40 degrees Fahrenheit and frozen food at or below 0 degrees Fahrenheit. This may be difficult when the power is out. Here are some tips to help you keep your food safe and/or determine if it is still safe:
- Keep the refrigerator and freezer doors closed as much as possible to maintain the cold temperature. The refrigerator will keep food safely cold for about four hours if it is unopened. A full freezer will hold the temperature for approximately 48 hours (24 hours if it is half full) if the door remains closed.
- Digital, dial or instant-read food thermometers and appliance thermometers will help you know if the food is at safe temperatures. Keep appliance thermometers in the refrigerator and freezer at all times. When the power is out, an appliance thermometer will always indicate the temperature in



Discard any perishable food (such as meat, poultry, fish, eggs and leftovers) that have been above 40 degrees Fahrenheit for two hours.

- the refrigerator and freezer no matter how long the power has been out. The refrigerator temperature should be 40 degrees Fahrenheit or below; the freezer, 0 degrees Fahrenheit or lower.
- If a thermometer has not been kept in the freezer, check each package of food to determine the safety. Remember, you can't rely on appearance or odor. If the food still contains ice crystals or is 40 degrees Fahrenheit or below, it is safe to refreeze. Refrigerated food should be safe as long as power is out no more than four hours. Keep the door closed as much as possible. Discard any perishable food (such as meat, poultry, fish, eggs and leftovers) that have been above 40 degrees Fahrenheit for two hours.
- Obtain dry or block ice to keep your refrigerator as cold as possible if the power is going to be out for a prolonged period of time. Fifty pounds of

dry ice should hold an 18-cubic foot full freezer for two days. Plan ahead and know where dry ice and block ice can be purchased.

- Do not put the food from the refrigerator and freezer out in the snow. Frozen food can thaw if it is exposed to the sun's rays even when the temperature is very cold. Refrigerated food may become too warm and foodborne bacteria could grow. The outside temperature could vary hour by hour and the temperature outside will not protect refrigerated and frozen food. Additionally, perishable items could be exposed to unsanitary conditions or to animals. Animals may harbor bacteria or disease; never consume food that has come in contact with an animal.
- Consider what you can do ahead of time to store your food safely in an emergency. Coolers are a great help for keeping food cold if the power will be out for more than four hours—have a couple on hand along with frozen gel packs. When your freezer is not full, keep items close together—this helps the food stay cold longer.

Be prepared for an emergency by having items on hand that don't require refrigeration and can be eaten cold or heated on the outdoor grill. Shelf-stable food, boxed or canned milk, water and canned goods should be part of a planned emergency food supply. Make sure you have ready-to-use baby formula for infants and pet food. Remember to use these items and replace them from time to time. Be sure to keep a hand-held can opener for an emergency.

Adapted in part from "Keeping Food Safe during an Emergency," U.S. Dept. of Agriculture Food Safety and Inspection Service, [www.fsis.usda.gov](http://www.fsis.usda.gov)

### How to Tell if Your Freezer Power Was Off When You Were Away

Especially during periods of bad weather, the power may go off and then return. If you're away from home for an extended period, it's possible everything in your freezer could thaw and be at unsafe temperatures for several days. As the food will freeze again when the electricity returns, it is easy to be unaware of any food safety problems. Here's a simple way to help detect if your freezer has gone off. Store an ice cube or two in a sealed plastic bag or small container in the freezer; a sealed bag/container is important so the ice cube doesn't evaporate and disappear. If the ice cube has melted down from its original shape, you'll know the power was off for an extended period of time.



## Consistent Poinsettia Care Can Bring Back Their Blooms Next Holiday Season

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During the winter holidays, poinsettias become the decorative plant of choice for many people. With proper care, poinsettias can be kept through the holiday season and brought back into full bloom later the next year.

If the poinsettia keeps its leaves, treat it like any houseplant. Place it in a sunny location and apply a complete fertilizer containing trace elements once every two weeks.

If the plant loses its leaves, let the soil dry out and keep the poinsettia in a cool location where it still can get some light, such as on a basement window ledge. Avoid setting the plant in places where the temperature rises above 60 degrees Fahrenheit; an average temperature of 50 or 55 degrees Fahrenheit is best.

In late April or early May, prepare resting poinsettias for regrowth by cutting their stems back to about three-five inches above the soil. When more



any roots that might be growing through the drainage holes.

For poinsettias that were resting, when new shoots are about one, inch long, apply a complete fertilizer containing trace elements. Fertilize plants at intervals of seven to ten days.

Pruning shapes poinsettias to form an attractive compact growth. To prevent the plants from getting too tall, pinch off or prune growing tips when they are four-six inches long. If new shoots grow another five inches before August, repeat the process.

When night temperatures dip below 55 or 60 degrees Fahrenheit, move poinsettias indoors to a sunny location. Beginning Sept. 25, the plants need darkness from 5 p.m. until 8 a.m. daily and night temperatures of 60-65 degrees Fahrenheit. Light from any lamps will prevent normal flowering of an uncovered poinsettia. To arrange dark conditions, put a cardboard box or other device over the plant. Continue this treatment until the plant shows color in late November.

than one plant is in the same pot, replant the poinsettias into individual containers. Place poinsettias in a light, warm place and water them whenever the soil begins to dry.

As soon as night temperatures reach a minimum of 60 degrees Fahrenheit, the plant can be set outside. Place it in a shady location for two to three weeks to allow for acclimatization and to prevent leaf sun scald, then sink the pot in a sunny location with well-drained soil. Turn the pot every few weeks to break off