

## Reviving Your Flooded Garden: Essential Steps and Precautions

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Following the recent heavy rainfall, reaching up to 9 inches in certain regions, gardeners throughout the county are now faced with the task of reviving their gardens. While some may have late-season cool crops already growing, others may have recently planted warm-season crops. The Panola County AgriLife Extension office is dedicated to supporting local land and homeowners by offering crucial advice and proactive measures to protect gardens from the aftermath of these destructive storms, as well as preparing for future weather events.

**Understanding the Impact of Flood Damage:** As climate patterns shift and extreme weather events become more frequent, gardeners are increasingly dealing with the consequences of floods. Whether caused by tropical storms or heavy rain, floods can wreak havoc, leaving behind toxic residues on soil and plants.

**Effects of Flood Damage to Gardens:** The severity of damage from garden floods varies based on factors such as rainfall volume, water depth, duration of flooding, soil porosity, and property elevation. Areas with poor drainage are particularly susceptible.

Standing water can lead to root suffocation, root rot, weakened plants, and increased vulnerability to pests and diseases. Signs of flood damage include yellowing leaves, wilting, discoloration, leaf curl, defoliation, and plant dieback. While many plants can survive short periods of waterlogging, shallow-rooted annuals and food crops are most at risk.

### What to Do if Your Garden Floods:

- **Drain Excess Water:** Once it's safe, remove standing water by digging furrows, aerating the soil, or using hoses or pumps.
- **Assess Damage:** After the water recedes, survey your yard, avoiding walking on garden beds to prevent soil compaction.
- **Wear Protective Clothing:** Protect yourself from pollutants in floodwaters by wearing gloves, boots, and protective clothing. Clean and disinfect clothing afterward.
- **Avoid Cross-Contamination:** Prevent the spread of contaminants by not using tools from flooded areas in unaffected parts of the garden.
- **Wash Off Plants:** Rinse off silt and mud, especially if plants were exposed to saltwater.
- **Cover Exposed Roots:** Protect roots from erosion by covering them with fresh soil.
- **Delay Pruning:** Allow time for plants to recover before pruning extensively.
- **Restore Soil:** Improve soil quality by incorporating organic matter once the ground dries out.

- **Delay Replanting:** Wait until the soil has thoroughly dried before replanting, especially edible crops in contaminated areas.

**Can Edible Crops Be Consumed After Flooding?** Due to contamination risks from raw sewage and pathogens such as E. coli, salmonella, and listeria, it is as a best safety practice, recommended to discard any produce touched by floodwaters. Even if not submerged, contamination may still occur, posing health risks, remember when in doubt, contact local extension services for advice or through it out.

**Preventative Measures:** To minimize flood damage:

- Address drainage issues.
- Build berms to divert excess water.
- Use raised beds or containers for soggy areas.
- Consider planting water-tolerant species.
- Improve soil drainage with organic matter.

By following these steps and precautions, you can help your garden recover from floods and prevent future damage.