



**Spencer Horticultural Solutions**

# Homegrown Horticulture

TIPS FOR SUCCESS IN YOUR OWN BACKYARD

## Hail & Other Horrible Things

With the summer heat comes unsettled weather conditions. There isn't much that we can do about the weather, other than to talk about it, wait 10 minutes for it to change, and be prepared to deal with the aftermath. We can also prepare ourselves in the hopes that we can avoid complete wrecks.

Hail is probably the most common severe weather issue that we deal with. It isn't necessarily all that common, but when it hits, it can do catastrophic damage to our vegetables (and the rest of the plants in the yard).

The impact that hail has on our plants will depend on several things. First, the size of the hail. Second, how long the hailstorm lasts. Third, the age and stage of growth that the plants are at.

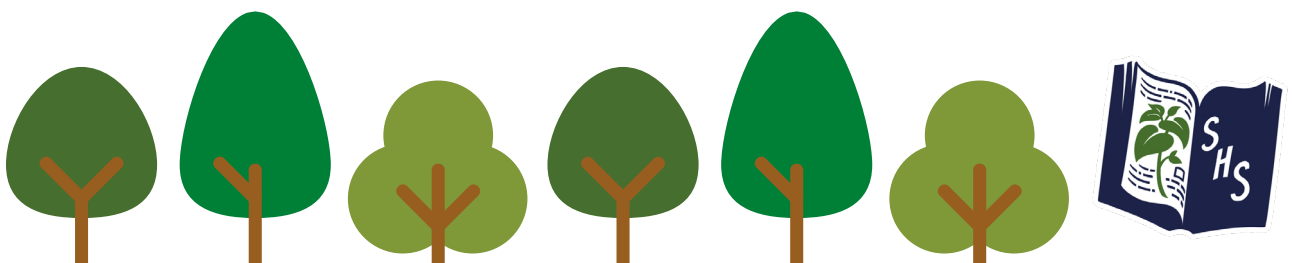
Big hail can cause more damage when it hits something, but a prolonged, heavy hailstorm of smaller hailstones can do more damage overall, as it just keeps pounding. The longer a hailstorm, the more damage it will cause. It tends to knock more stuff down and cause more damage over the entire plant.

Younger plants are more sensitive to damage, as they can be crushed, broken, and destroyed, with little chance of recovery. At the same time, being smaller, sometimes they avoid the worst of the damage, because they are harder to hit. Plants that are flowering can have more losses overall since the plant won't have fruit.

The amount of foliage that is damaged can affect the overall impact of the hail on the plant. Plants will try and replace lost foliage, most of the time, which can mean that harvests are delayed, the quality of what is harvested is changed, and plants can be a bit stunted. Also, if a plant is injured at a critical growth stage, it can throw it off its cycle and it might not recover and finish off what it was doing, like setting tubers, making tap roots, or fruiting.

If you experience hail damage, clean up the debris, and then wait and watch for at least a week, before doing anything else. If plants are going to recover, you'll have a better sense of what they'll do after they've started to grow again. In a garden, most of the time, all that you can do is clean up, and try and make sure that things are upright, and the air is flowing. If things are destroyed, just pull them, and toss them. Some stuff will be beyond repair. In the yard, remove broken branches, rake up debris and leaves, and let stuff settle.

Other types of weather can cause damage, although we often give hail the spotlight and centre stage. A heavy rain can cause some physical damage to tender fruit and plant parts. It will also splash a lot of soil onto leaves, which can lead to diseases. Heavy rains can also cause flooding, which can be a problem for plants if the soil stays saturated for extended periods. Drain things off as quickly as you can. If things sit too long, just pull them out later, as they probably won't amount to much at harvest time. If you notice that one area has drainage problems, focus on fixing that area, as much as you can, to avoid issues in the future. There is nothing like a big storm to show you where the water flows in your yard.



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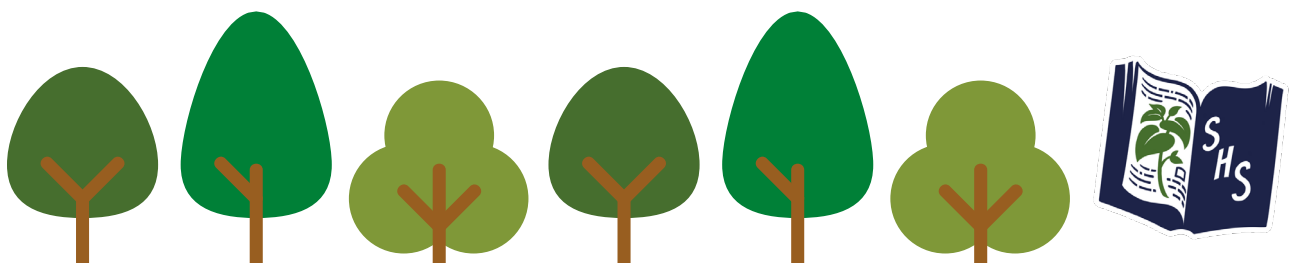
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Winds can cause broken branches and can batter smaller plants. Once things are safe, clean stuff up as best as you can. If you have issues in your garden, maybe look at temporary screens to slow the winds in the growing season. If you have yard issues, you might need a pro to fix hazards.

Severe weather happens. Most of what we can do is wait and watch and learn, to try and prevent issues in future. For myself, I have tried different things. This year, I found that because of the big changes in my yard over the past year or two, suddenly the weather dynamics in the space are different. Stuff that was sheltered by my neighbour's trees aren't sheltered anymore. Trees that were intertwined before are now freestanding and maybe not as strong as I thought. My new beds give me new options for protecting my plants from hail, as they are small enough that I can hang a hail net over the railings, and they are mostly sheltered. Note to self: put out the hail net BEFORE the hailstorm...



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