

The Concrete Truth



By David York

Winter Elements vs. Your Garden Accent

The New Year is here and so is Old Man Winter. To me, fountains are like music in the garden... being a drummer and playing music inspires me, just as the sound of a bubbling fountain can add an amazing, inspiring atmosphere; a soothing sound and a place for the birds to kick back. I bet you're wondering how to still enjoy your outdoor fountain in the cold and freezing weather conditions. Think back to last winter – we had record temps in California. Morgan Hill and Gilroy bottomed out in the mid 20's – plenty cold enough to freeze the water in your fountain or to damage your pump.

Here are a few helpful hints to protect your investment:

For any temperature below 35°

Keeping your fountain running is really the best option because the recirculating water cannot freeze completely. You may have a top layer of ice frozen and some really cool icicles in the morning – almost a piece of natural art. Last year the gardens at Garden Accents looked like they were decorated with giant ice sculptures. If you keep your fountain running, the water will not completely freeze and your pump will continue working. The moving water helps the pump parts from getting sticky and keeps the fountain bowl from completely freezing and cracking.

For continued cold days and nights

My recommendation is to drain the water from the fountain (a wet/dry shop vacuum works well). Covering the fountain with a tarp or heavy blanket will help to keep it from freezing.

For statuary and fountains

Good preventive maintenance is to use a clear masonry sealer (the



kind that is recommended for cement). This can be purchased at most hardware stores. Apply this product on a warm day to keep your fountains and statues from absorbing moisture in the winter months.

You might have noticed on your fountain surface a white residue. This is caused by climate change and cold weather. Also, concrete has alkali in it which can appear on the surface. The best way to clean this is with white vinegar and water (about $\frac{3}{4}$ vinegar $\frac{1}{4}$ water) mixed together. You can use a sponge or a rag to clean the surface with this mixture.

In areas where it snows, draining the water completely and covering the fountain or storing it in the garage is the best option. Hairline cracks are common on all fountains and shouldn't be taken too seriously – as these can be repaired easily.

These few tips will help to preserve your fountain so you can enjoy it even more when spring arrives.

And that's The Concrete Truth!

David York has over twenty years of fountain and statuary experience. He has been employed at Garden Accents located at 11155 Lena Avenue, Gilroy for over three years.