

Trees in Winter

Winter presents a special set of problems for our trees.

SNOW:

Snow is a major cause of damage to trees because it can cause bending, breaking, splitting or actually uprooting of the tree.

A tree's structure often determines whether it will be damaged by ice storms or heavy snow clinging to the branches. Arborvitae for example is a plant that doesn't handle heavy snow well as the snow often causes the branches to separate. *Shaking off the accumulated snow, even as it continues to fall, helps prevent permanently damaged and separated branches of arborvitae.*

Snow storms occurring when the trees still have their leaves also presents a problem for it could add unbearable weight. A tree with good, right-angle branches will have less trouble than one with narrow crotches. *Good pruning practices help maintain a good branching pattern.*

Although snow causes damage to trees it can also protect their roots from extreme fluctuations in temperature thereby preventing damage or even death. Ground covered with about 8 inches of snow seldom falls below 23 degrees F.

SALT:

Salt can damage trees by causing a dehydration of the cells of the tree's roots. Using course sand instead of salt and avoiding shoveling salt-contaminated snow near trees helps prevent root damage during winter months. *Using a more environmentally friendly compound called calcium magnesium acetate, although more expensive than traditional calcium chloride, is much more tree-friendly and may be cheaper in the long run. A new product called "icebite" made of beet juice is receiving some attention lately and may be the new de-icer of choice since it is not detrimental to plants.*

Winter's challenges to a tree's health can be moderated by additional care based on these few simple precautions. The Englewood Cliffs Shade Tree Commission asks that you help to protect the trees on your property by following these simple tips.

