



Snow and Salts

When it snows in the winter season, did you know it is actually an asset to your plants in the landscape? The snow blanket provides needed moisture to the root systems as it melts and when quantities are deep enough, it insulates sensitive plants that would otherwise be devastated by cold winter winds. It is usually not the snow that causes problems to your landscape but the removal process that occurs when roadways and sidewalks become covered. It is the ongoing 1-2 day storms where the snow gradually builds up that cause most the issues. Roadways and sidewalks need to be kept clear as people continue about their day and proper removal and chemical use are many times forgotten.

The best way to protect plants from salt damage is to not use chemicals at all. Clear sidewalks and driveways early enough in the day so the sun can melt and dry any residue.

Plowing or piling snow onto groundcover/perennial beds and around the shrub/evergreen beds is ok as long as it is clean snow with no chemical residue. The piles can actually insulate and protect sensitive plants from the extreme cold. Added benefit is when the snow melts it adds moisture to the root system.

Never plow snow into or pile snow on top of shrub or evergreens. Branches are very brittle when it's cold and they will break easily. Many times you do not even know they are broken until it gets warm in the spring and the branches turn brown.

Chemical Treatments

Treating the roadways and walkways is unfortunately much needed in today's environment. When doing so please remember less is more, it takes time for products to work and excess chemicals do not evaporate they are leached into nearby soils causing long term problems in the summer months. When using chemical treatments understanding their drawbacks might outweigh their initial benefits.

Sodium Chloride or common rock salt - A naturally occurring mineral (unground and filtered table salt) mined throughout the world. Its main use is on roadways and is very toxic to plants. Rock salt should never be used on concrete or stone products as it will deteriorate the surface. Also the leaching of surface run off into landscape beds or lawn areas is detrimental to the health of the garden.

Calcium or Magnesium Chloride – A chemically created product best used on sidewalks and driveways. It should be used per manufacturer's recommendation as at higher rates the product can be toxic to vegetation.

Calcium magnesium acetate – Another chemically created product that has the corrosive qualities of tap water. Cost is excessively more, but the environmental impact is nonexistent. This making it the best solution for the residential client, the product is safe for your walkways, your plants, your pets and most importantly your local environment.