

## Winter damage is evident now

With one of the coldest winters in history behind us, now is the right time for homeowners to have their landscaping checked for cold weather injury. Trees should be inspected for branches broken by winter winds and heavy snow. Shrubbery and new fall plantings should be examined for winter injury, rodent damage to bark, and possible root damage resulting from colder than normal temperatures.

According to Ted Baer, vice-president of the Davey Tree Expert Co., damage to trees and shrubs was extremely widespread this winter. Even nurseries suffered losses of some species of trees. Basically, most winter damage can be put into three categories: dehydration, temperature tolerance and structural damage.

Dehydration is by far the most common type of winter injury on woody plants. Evaporation of moisture from leaves or twigs goes on almost continually, but is much faster when the air temperature is above freezing.

Bright winter sunshine and brisk winds serve to accelerate the process and the condition may be repeated on several successive days. In the meantime, stems, roots and soils may be solidly frozen and the tree or shrub is unable to replace lost moisture.

"The results of such drying are certain death," Baer cautioned. "Evergreens are usually the first

to suffer, but many deciduous trees and shrubs also are vulnerable. The trunks of thin-barked trees are prime targets for damage, too."

Perhaps the most prevalent and widespread type of dehydration is the familiar browning or burning of both needles and broadleaf evergreens. You can see much evidence of this type of damage this spring, particularly on pines, hollies, taxus, and rhododendron. Suggested remedies or preventives include shading, wind-screens, mulching, changes in location and use of antidesiccants which retard evaporation of moisture from the plant.

Where there is winter injury indicated by browning foliage or dropping needles, it often is better to delay pruning until the new growth starts. The full extent of damage can then be better determined and the pruning and reshaping job more effectively done.

"Antidesiccants in particular are a valuable aid in protecting both evergreens and deciduous plants from excessive drying," Baer said. "However, they offer little or no protection against 'deep freeze' injury. Plants that are subjected to temperatures below their natural limits will be damaged or killed with or without a protective covering."

The Davey arborist pointed out that the best of all "secret weapons" for combating winter injury is fall feeding.



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