

**All Gardens
Great & Small**
by
York Co.
Horticultural Agent
Tom Becker



Salt Can Destroy Roadside Plantings

This is the third article in a series on caring for snow-bound plants.

You've seen how rock salt (sodium chloride) corrodes automobile bodies, concrete sidewalks and asphalt driveways. Did you know it can also harm landscape plants?

Deicing salt is usually refined rock salt consisting of about 98.5 percent sodium chloride, 1.2 percent calcium sulfate, 0.1 percent magnesium chloride and 0.2 percent rock.

Salt sprayed on plants from passing vehicles may harm plant parts and roots even when the ground is frozen. Salt may accumulate in the soil by salt-laden snow plowed from streets and sidewalks onto adjacent landscape.

If you've ever tried to shake table salt from a wet shaker, you know that salt readily absorbs water. Rock salt absorbs much of the water normally available to plant roots. Even though soil moisture is plentiful, high amounts of salt can produce a drought-like environment for plants.

When salt dissolves in water, sodium and chloride ions separate and may harm plants. The chloride ions are absorbed readily by the roots and transported to the leaves. They accumulate there to toxic levels, which cause a characteristic marginal leaf scorch.

Excessive salt has the same effects on plants as drought or root injury: stunted growth, yellow foliage, premature autumn leaf coloration, death of leaf margins (scorch) and twig dieback.

When a salt spray hits conifers and needled evergreen trees in winter, the foliage turns yellow or brown in early spring. If the spray is the primary source of salt deposit, the new year's growth will soon mask the discolored needles. But, if there is too much salt in the soil, new needles may die. If this happens several years in a row, it can kill the whole plant.

Salt injury often is confined to branches facing the road. As you might expect, trees closer to the road suffer more damage than those set farther back. The usual recommendation is that plants should be located at least 30-50 feet from the edge of the road. Of

course, there are exceptions. The actual distance that salt spray can extend to cause damage depends on the road surface material, wind direction, traffic speed, weight or size of the vehicles, slope of the land, and the time of year.

What can you do? First, don't substitute salt for shoveling. Remove as much ice and snow as possible before sprinkling lightly with a mixture of salt and sand. Using sand or cinders instead of salt can reduce plant injury. Second, use anti-skid materials like sawdust, cinders, sand or clean kitty litter. They won't harm plants, car parts, walkways or driveways. Third, select plants that are resistant to salt injury. These include Pampas Grass, Euonymus, oleander, pyracantha and others.

Fourth, select other material in conjunction with or in place of salt. Calcium chloride, reported to be less toxic to plants, requires larger quantities to achieve the same effect. However, it is gypsum, calcium sulfate or fertilizers that are much more expensive than rock salt. Try to avoid applying any substances after March 1. At this time, plants emerge from dormancy and are more vulnerable.

Fifth, consider erecting screens of fencing or burlap to ward off salt sprays from roads. Don't pile salt and snow around plants or in places where the resulting saltwater will drain into plants when the snow melts.

In some instances, heavy watering can help to leach salt from the soil. Aerate your lawn to reduce the salt injury. If weather permits, get out your hose and flush the area around salt-exposed roots with fresh water.

Tasty Ways To Say

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CREAM FILLED JUMBO SHELLS

- 1 box (12) jumbo shells, uncooked
- 4 cups ricotta cheese
- 2 cups shredded mozzarella cheese
- 1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 3 eggs
- 1/4 teaspoon oregano
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1 tablespoon chopped parsley
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper
- 3 1/2 cups spaghetti sauce

Cook jumbo shells according to package directions; drain. Cool in a single layer on wax paper or aluminum foil. Combine cheeses, eggs, parsley, oregano, salt and pepper. Fill each shell with about 2 tablespoons cheese mixture.

Spread a thin layer of sauce on the bottom of a 9x13-inch baking pan. Place shells, open side down, in a single layer in pan and cover with remaining spaghetti sauce. Sprinkle with additional parmesan cheese, if desired. Cover with aluminum foil and bake at 350 degrees about 35 minutes or until hot and bubbly. Fills about 36 shells.

Kristi Schoffstall
Lebanon Co. Dairy Princess

FROZEN STRAWBERRY SQUARES

- Crust:
- 1 cup flour
 - 1/2 cup brown sugar
 - 1/2 cup chopped walnuts
 - 1/2 cup butter, melted
- Mix together ingredients. Bake in a shallow pan at 350 degrees for 20 minutes; stir occasionally.

Sprinkle 1/2 crumbs in a 9x13-inch pan.

Topping:

- 2 egg whites
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 cups sliced strawberries
- 2 tablespoons lemon juice
- 1 cup whipping cream

Combine egg whites, sugar, berries, and lemon juice. Beat on high speed for about 10 minutes. Whip cream; fold into strawberry mixture. Spoon over crumbs. Top with remaining 1/2 crumbs. Freeze 6 hours.

Sara Martin
Savannah, N.Y.
STRAWBERRIES IN THE SNOW

- 8 ounces cream cheese, softened to room temperature
 - 1 1/2 cups confectioners' sugar
 - 12 ounces whipped cream
 - 1 teaspoon vanilla flavoring
 - 1 baked angel food cake
 - 1 quart strawberries, sliced
 - 2 packages strawberry glaze
- Mix cream cheese and sugar until creamy. Add whipped topping and vanilla. Tear angel food cake into small pieces. Mix together strawberries and glaze in a bowl.

Put a layer of cake first in a large bowl, then follow with a layer of cream cheese mixture, then strawberry-glaze mix. Continue layers in this manner. Spread cream cheese mixture on top and refrigerate.

This makes a nice red and white dish to serve for Valentine's Day.

Elizabeth Smith
Lebanon Co.
Li'l Miss Dairy Princess

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