

Wintry Weather May Damage Trees

Rance Scott Harmon
Penn State

Forest Resources Extension

From the mix of snow and freezing rain that blanketed jack-o-lanterns in October to the Presidents' Day blizzard, trees have been under assault this winter season.

The weight of snow and ice can cause branches and even the main stems of trees to bend, twist, or break. The October

storm was especially damaging because the leaves on many trees had not yet fallen, and the remaining leaves provided additional surfaces for snow and freezing rain to cling to.

Homeowners and forest landowners can take steps to help trees and woodlands recover from winter storms. Before assessing damage, it is important to first consider safety. Avoid venturing into a woodlot on windy

days after a storm. Be alert for large leaning trees and branches. Keep in mind that hanging branches can be especially hazardous.

Due to greater exposure to the weather, trees near roads or other open areas often suffer more damage than trees in the interior of the forest, so the actual damage may look worse from a trail or road than it actually is. A good way to judge whether a tree will survive storm damage is to look at the upper branches. If less than 50 percent of the crown is damaged, the tree has a good chance of survival; however, depending on the extent of the damage, the tree's growth may slow down while it recovers. If between 50 percent and 75 percent of the crown is damaged, the tree may survive; however, its wounds may provide entryways for damaging insects and diseases, especially if large tops or large lower branches break or if extensive areas of bark tear. If more than 75 percent of the crown is damaged, the tree has a low chance of survival.

Agri-Education Seminar To Address Challenging Climate In Agriculture

LANCASTER (Lancaster Co.) — "Unusual Times, Unusual Actions" reflects the nature of the agricultural industry in Pennsylvania over the last 12 months. It will also be the theme for First Union's 22nd Annual Agri-Education Seminar to take place on Thursday, Feb. 27 at the Farm and Home Center in Lancaster from 8:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

"It is common for some agricultural commodities to have a bad year while others do well," said Darvin E. Boyd, senior vice president and director of agri-finance at First Union. "But in 2002, farmers of dairy, livestock, and poultry suffered price hits, while in the same year, growers were dealing with drought conditions. That's why we've assembled the very best minds in the fields of agricultural policy, business practices and the financial environment to share their unique insights with the nearly 400 attendees of this annual event."

Featured speakers will include Robert D. Steele, Dean in the College of Agricultural Sciences, Penn State, addressing the theme "Unusual Times, Unusual Actions;" Ronald J. Hanson, the Neal E. Harlan Professor of Agribusiness at University of Nebraska speaking on "Keeping A Positive Focus on Family Farming;" and Jay H. Bryson, Ph.D., vice president and global economist for Wachovia Securities presenting "The U.S. Economic Outlook."

Providing his insights on the

business of farming, David M. Kohl, professor of agricultural economics and small business management at Virginia Polytechnical institute will discuss "Actions Louder Than Words: An Internal and External Look." Pennsylvania Dairy Princess, Raechel Kilgore, will share her observations on "Youth and the Future of Agriculture."

John Blanchfield, director of the Center for Agricultural and Rural Banking at the American Bankers Association will share his thoughts on "The Usual and Unusual from Washington, D.C.;" and H. Louis Moore along with Kenneth W. Bailey will predict "Reactions to Current Ag Market Forces."

Wachovia Corporation (NYSE:WB), created through the September 1, 2001, merger of First Union and Wachovia, had assets of \$334 billion and stockholder's equity of \$32 billion, Sept. 30, 2002. Wachovia is a leading provider of financial services to 20 million retail, brokerage and corporate customers throughout the East Coast and the nation.

The company operates full-service banking offices under the First Union and Wachovia names in 11 East Coast states and Washington, D.C., and offers full-service brokerage with offices in 49 states and global services through more than 30 international offices. Online banking and brokerage products and services are available through wachovia.com.

USDA Slates Disaster Aid For Greene, Fayette Counties

CAMP HILL (Cumberland Co.) — At Pennsylvania Farm Bureau's urging and the support of several members of Pennsylvania's Congressional delegation, the USDA has now included Greene and Fayette counties in the list of eligible counties for disaster assistance. The counties were unintentionally excluded when the original paperwork was filed within the agency.

The sign-up period for disaster aid in these counties began Feb. 18 and will continue through Mar. 24, according to the information provided by Congressional offices.

USDA's disaster relief program for livestock, the Livestock Compensation Program (LCP) was implemented to provide aid to counties that were hard-hit by the 2002 drought.

Homeowners can consult trained arborists who can evaluate damage, remove dangerous trees and branches, and correctly prune trees to help them survive. Private forest landowners can consult natural resource professionals to assess damage to their woodland, mitigate dangerous conditions, and recommend appropriate management practices.

While storms do damage and kill trees, most trees are resilient and survive even severe winter weather. Storms are one way that forests naturally thin themselves with time. When storms and other natural and human-caused processes open holes in the forest canopy, more sunlight is able to reach the forest floor. The sunlight leads to the growth of small trees, shrubs, wildflowers, and other plants near the ground. This lush growth provides food within reach of many wildlife species. Moreover, different species of trees thrive in these sunny gaps than under the shade of mature trees, so the diversity of trees and wildlife habitat increases as small disturbances occur across the landscape.

Branches that fall to the ground after storms provide ten-

der twigs, buds, and winter fruits that are within reach of small mammals, which in turn serve as prey for predators such as foxes, weasels, and birds of prey. Damaged areas of trees often lead to decay, which in time produce cavities that can serve as homes for wood ducks, bluebirds, woodpeckers, owls, chickadees, squirrels, raccoons, bats, mice and many other animals.

Trees and large woody branches that fall to the ground provide cover, foraging habitat, thermal protection, and nesting sites for salamanders and small mammals. Twenty-three species of amphibians and reptiles take refuge in decaying wood in the northeastern United States, including box turtles, salamanders, and snakes.

The Pennsylvania Forest Stewardship Program provides many publications about Pennsylvania's privately owned forestlands. For a list of free publications, call (800) 235-WISE (toll-free) or contact the Forest Stewardship Program, Forest Resources Extension, The Pennsylvania State University, 7 Ferguson Building, University Park, PA 16802, RNRExt@psu.edu.

Harvesting Quality Hay, Crop Insurance Workshop Set

BELLE VERNON (Washington Co.) — Penn State Cooperative Extension, in cooperation with John Marchezak, a Washington county dairyman, will sponsor a Harvesting Quality Hay and Crop Insurance Workshop for interested farmers at 10:00 a.m. Wednesday, Feb. 26, here at the Holiday Inn.

Featured speaker will be Bernard Adam, an internationally recognized Canadian farmer and inventor. Adam will present a workshop on harvesting high quality hay and haylage. Adam will focus on how farmers can get more hay or haylage from their

existing fields. He also will explain the benefits of one of his inventions, the Techno-Bale® round bale transporter.

Don Fretts, cooperative extension agent, will present what field crop insurance options still remain for the 2003 crop year. He will focus on basic coverage, crop revenue coverage, and multiperil crop insurance.

Lunch is being provided. Reservations are requested, and should be made with the Washington (724) 228-6881 or Fayette (724) 438-0111 county cooperative extension offices by Monday, Feb. 24.



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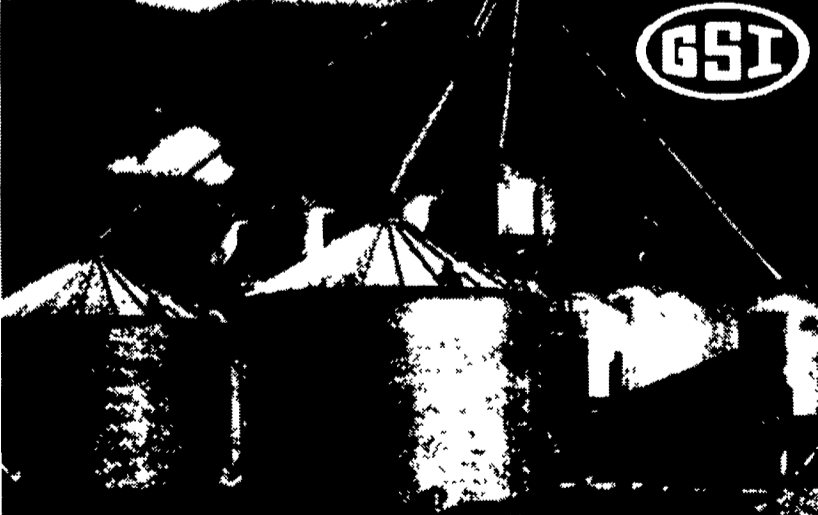
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