



# Webster County Acreage Living

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## **Damage to Trees and Shrubs from Snow and Ice**

*Information provided by Richard Jauron, ISU Dept. of Horticulture*

A snow and ice covered landscape is a beautiful winter scene. However, heavy amounts of snow and ice on the branches of trees and shrubs can cause considerable damage. Multi-stemmed evergreens, such as junipers and arborvitae, and week-wooded deciduous trees, such as Siberian elm, green ash, and silver maple, are most susceptible to branch breakage. Improper removal of snow and ice can increase the amount of damage to them.

The most serious damage occurs during ice storms. Large branches or entire trees can be lost due to the

tremendous weight of the ice. Do not attempt to remove the ice by beating the branches with a broom or rake. This will only cause greater damage.

It may be possible to prop up a small tree to prevent breakage. If the temperature is above freezing, spraying the ice-coated branches with cold water will help melt the ice. Hot or boiling water may actually injure the trees and shrubs. You should stay away from large, ice-laden trees. Nothing can be done to prevent damage to large trees.

Accumulations of heavy, wet snow on evergreens can also cause severe branch breakage. Gently shake the snow from the branches or carefully brush off the snow with a broom.

When shoveling driveways and sidewalks, don't throw heavy, wet snow or ice onto shrubs or small trees. This can cause considerable damage.

If branch breakage occurs on a tree, prune back the damage limb to the main branch or trunk. Damage shrubs may need to be pruned in the spring to restore their attractive, natural shape.

## **The Importance of Hand Washing**

*Information provided by Paulelda Gilbert, ISUE Nutrition & Health Field Specialist*

The main way that illnesses like colds and flu are spread is from person to person in respiratory droplets or coughs and sneezes. Germs spread when a person comes in contact with these respiratory droplets as they move through the air or are deposited on surfaces and then the person touches his or her own eyes, mouth or nose before washing their hands.

Hands are easily contaminated because they are always in contact with the environment. Shaking hands,

handling toys, touching door knobs, and shopping carts are just a few typical ways to spread germs.

The success rate of hand washing depends on when and also how often hands are washed. When you wash your hands, use soap and warm water; rub your hands vigorously for 20 seconds. Wash all surfaces including backs of hands, wrists, between fingers and under fingernails. Rinse well and dry hands preferably with a single use

towel. Turn off the water using a paper towel instead of bare hands.

Hand washing is effective because it can break the cycle of germ transmission from the hands to the mouth, eyes and nose. When soap and water are not available, alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers may be used but are not as effective as washing with soap and running water.



## ***Those Rascally Rabbits***

*Information provided by ISUE publication, "Rabbit Damage to Tree Plantings" – WL-47*

Tree bark is a major rabbit food only during December to February; however considerable amounts of it may be eaten any time from the first killing frost of the fall until mid-April.

Both cottontail rabbits and jackrabbits can severely damage trees by girdling the trunks or major branches or by completely severing the growing points of terminal leaders on small trees.

Rabbits may debark a tree from as low as an inch above the soil line or snow line to as high as they can reach standing on their hind legs. Debarked areas should show the marks of the rabbit's incisor teeth.

Willows, poplars, and apple are most frequently attacked by rabbits. Maples and ash are susceptible until they are past the sapling stage of growth. Pines are definitely preferred over firs and spruce. Walnut and oak are generally ignored by rabbits.

## ***Does My Car Feel Wind Chill?***

*By Shawn Shouse, ISU Extension Field Specialist/Ag Engineering, 712-769-2600*

Every winter, as arctic winds sweep the Iowa landscape, I get into a discussion somewhere about wind chill. Sooner or later, somebody will ask if wind chill affects cars. I can't find a wind chill and automotive expert, but here's an engineer's perspective.

Wind chill factors report how cold it feels with the combination of wind and low temperatures. The concept is the same as hoping for a breeze on a hot summer day. A major part of the cooling effect is that the thin layer of warm air surrounding your body is swept away by the wind, forcing your body to give up more heat to warm that thin layer of air again...and

Preventing the problem:

- Burn any tree trimmings and brush cuttings or pile them at least 100 feet away from the plantation.
- Hunt your rabbits during the fall or encourage other hunters to harvest them.
- Fencing is the most effective method of protecting an area from rabbits. Use a fence of chicken wire 36 inches high with several inches buried in the ground.
- Wrapping the trunks of individual trees will discourage rabbit attacks. Commercial tree wrap and heavy aluminum foil are equally effective. Wrap each tree as high as rabbits can reach standing on top of the expected snow cover.

again...and again. The chilling power of the wind comes not because the wind is cold, but because the wind removes the heat from your *body* more quickly. The temperature we hear reported is the air temperature at which still air would have the same cooling effect on your body.

So, what about your car? After being exposed for several hours, your car will be no colder with a strong wind than with still conditions. But if your car is warmer than the surrounding air, it will lose heat much faster in a strong wind. Once you start your car, it will take longer to

- Repellents will usually protect trees for an entire winter or about two months. They should be applied in the late fall when temperatures are above freezing so that the material will dry on the bark rather than freeze on. A homemade repellent can be made by dissolving seven pounds of lump rosin in one gallon of alcohol. Apply the mixture to the trunk and low branches of the trees with a paint brush. Commercial rabbit repellents are applied as sprays. The following repellents are registered for sale in Iowa: Chaperone Rabbit and Deer Repellent, Hopkins Thiram 42-S Fungicide and Repellent, Rabbit Scat, Rabbit Rid, and Science Rabbit and Deer Repellent.

warm up. And when you turn off your car, it will cool down more quickly. Come to think of it, this is exactly what we want to happen at the car's radiator, sweeping air across a hot surface to remove heat more quickly.

In summary, if an object is at the outdoor temperature and generating no heat, it will not be affected by the wind. Any object trying to generate heat or maintain a temperature higher than the surrounding air will be affected by the cooling power of the wind.

**Water Quality-Tests and Treatment** - Information provided by Gary Boerner, Webster County Sanitarian, 574-3801

Water quality is of concern to everyone, especially if you depend upon a private well as your source. Quality is the acceptability of the water for uses like drinking, cooking, bathing, and laundering.

Drinking water supplies may be contaminated by many sources. Hazardous household wastes, septic systems, lawn and garden chemicals, leaking fuel storage tanks, animal wastes, agriculture chemicals, landfills, and leaching of metals from plumbing systems may contaminate water. The aquifer which is supplying water to your well may contain dissolved minerals and metals that you may find objectionable.

Contaminated water may have off-tastes, odors, or visible particles. However, some dangerous contaminants in water are not easy to detect. Accurate water testing is needed to determine safety and quality. Water testing also identifies the need for water treatment equipment. When water is contaminated, it is best to **eliminate the source of the contamination**, if at all possible. If this cannot be done, then water may need to be treated. But water should be tested first to determine what the contaminants are. Below is a list of some clues of contamination and what you may want to test for.

<b>Appearance:</b> Frothy, foamy Black flakes Brown, red, yellow	<b>Recommended Test</b> Detergents Manganese Iron, tannic acid	<b>Illness:</b> Family/guest	<b>Recommended Test</b> Total coliform bacteria, nitrate, sulfates
<b>Stains/Precipitates:</b> Red, brown Black Blue, green White deposits, scum	<b>Recommended Test</b> Iron Manganese Copper Hardness	<b>Discoloration of Teeth:</b> Discoloration of child's teeth	<b>Recommended Test</b> Fluoride
<b>Odors/taste:</b> Bitter Rotten egg Metallic Salty Septic, musty, earthy Soapy Gasoline, oil	<b>Recommended Test</b> Nitrate, sulfates Hydrogen sulfide pH, iron, zinc, copper, lead Total dissolved solids, chloride, sodium Total coliform bacteria, iron Detergents (surfactants) Aromatic volatile, organic chemicals	<b>Infant in House:</b> Infant less than 6 month	<b>Recommended Test-</b> Nitrate
		<b>Septic System:</b> Septic System	<b>Recommended Test</b> Total coliform bacteria, nitrate, sulfates, sodium
		<b>Livestock feedlot/confinement</b> Livestock feedlot/confinement	<b>Recommended Test</b> Total coliform bacteria, nitrate, total dissolved solids

Once contaminants are identified, then a treatment system can be decided upon. There are 8 general types of treatment systems available for household use. These include carbon filters, fiber filters, reverse osmosis units, distillation, neutralizers, chemical-feed pumps, disinfection, and softeners. These systems range in cost from a few dollars to several thousand dollars, so it is important to know what contaminants your water may contain. For example, you may have a taste/odor problem that can be treated with a \$30 carbon filter instead of \$700 whole house treatment systems that will treat a whole range of contaminations that your water does not contain. Below is a chart of some water quality problems and the recommended treatment system for that problem.

<b>Problem</b> Bacteria and other microorganisms Taste and Odor Hydrogen sulfide (rotten egg odor)	<b>Recommended Treatment</b> Disinfection Carbon filter Oxidizing filter followed by carbon filter, chlorination Followed by sediment filter
Sediment (suspended particles) Hardness (calcium and magnesium) Dissolved iron	Fiber filter Softener Softener for up to 5mg/liter; Iron filter; Chlorination Followed by sand filter and carbon filter
pH (acid or alkaline conditions) Organic chemicals (pesticides, fuels) Metals (lead, mercury, arsenic, cadmium & other minerals (nitrate sulfate, sodium)	Neutralizing filter or chemical-feed pump Carbon filter Reverse osmosis; distillation

If you think you have a water quality problem, call Gary Boerner, Webster Co. Sanitarian @ 515-574-3801. He can give you names or certified laboratories that test drinking water.

## Questions Asked During the Months of February & March

- Q. We lost power and I am wondering what foods I can refreeze?`**
- A.** Foods that still contain ice crystals are safe to refreeze. Also thawed fruit if it still tastes and smells good; bread; cake; cookies; plain doughnuts; nuts; flour; cereal; juice; margarine and cheese. Raw meat and poultry that has thawed but is still cold (40°F or less) can be refrozen raw or cooked thoroughly and refrozen. You should not refreeze food that has thawed completely—especially meat, poultry and seafood. Other items you should not refreeze are: prepared, cooked foods such as pizza, casseroles and stew; any food that has poor or questionable color or odor; thawed vegetables; creamed foods, puddings or other low-acid foods that have thawed; and melted ice cream.
- Q. The seeds that I start indoors germinate poorly. Why?**
- A.** Poor or erratic germination of seeds may be caused by improper planting (for example, planting too deeply), uneven moisture and cool temperatures. To maintain uniform moisture levels, place clear plastic food wrap over the containers. Flats can also be covered with clear plastic domes. Remove the plastic food wrap or dome as soon as germination occurs. Most seeds germinate best when the medium temperature is 70 to 75 degrees Fahrenheit. Placing containers in a warm location in the house, such as on top of a radiator or near a heat register, usually provides suitable germination temperatures.
- Q. Rabbits have damaged several trees and shrubs in my yard. Can I do anything to save them?**
- A.** The deep snow and prolonged period of snowcover has denied access to food on the ground for the rabbits, so they have fed extensively on unprotected trees and shrubs in windbreaks, home orchards, and landscape plantings. Damage has been most extensive on crabapples, apples, serviceberries, plums, cherries, willows, and honeylocust. On many trees, the bark has been removed completely around the trunk, effectively girdling them. Rabbits have also fed on deciduous shrubs. Extensive damage has been observed on winged euonymus (burning bush), sumacs, dogwoods, cotoneasters, viburnums, roses and spireas. The rabbits have debarked large stems and snapped off small twigs. Trees that have been completely girdled have essentially been destroyed. Wrapping the trunk or applying pruning paint to the damaged area will not save the tree. Most affected trees will sucker from the base. However, since most fruit and ornamental trees are propagated by grafting, suckers which originate from the rootstock will not produce a desirable tree. Many deciduous shrubs have the ability to produce new shoots or suckers at their base. Because of this many severely damaged deciduous shrubs will eventually recover. (Some shrubs may require several years to fully recover.) Girdled stems should be cut off just below the feeding injury.
- Q. I have overwintered several bare-root geraniums in paper bags. When should I cut back the plants and pot them?**
- A.** In mid-March, remove the bare-root geraniums from their storage location and prune or cut back each plant. Prune out the shriveled, brown, dead material. Cut back to solid, green, live stem tissue. After pruning, pot each plant and water thoroughly. Place the potted geraniums in a sunny window or under fluorescent lights. The plants should begin to leaf out in few days. Bare-root geraniums that are pruned back and potted in mid-March should develop into healthy, attractive plants that can be planted outdoors in May.
- Q. When will the Webster Co. Extension Office be hosting the I.D.A.L.S. Pesticide Testing?**
- A.** I.D.A.L.S. will be conducting testing on March 10th @ the Webster Co. Extension Office. You may come to test anytime between 10:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m. The Webster Co. Extension Office has pesticide manuals available for your convenience (cost depends on manual).

