

# How to prevent snow damage to plants

The gruesome task of shoveling snow out in the freezing cold makes our plants hidden underneath the last thing on our minds. But forgetting about your gardens during the winter can have serious consequences! Snow damage to plants can be severe, but it is easily preventable.

A good layer of snow is actually good for your garden. Snow acts as an insulator to protect plants from severe cold and dry winter winds. It also adds nutrients to the soil and hydrates your gardens as it melts in the spring. In addition, snow insulates the ground and helps to prevent plants from heaving during extreme cold. So, for the most part, as much as we may not like it, snow is good for your gardens!

A heavy, wet snowfall can weigh down plants, as well as tree and shrub branches, but it rarely causes much damage. The most major problems actually occur during snow removal. Flying snow and ice from snow blowers and plows can cause major damage to plants. Add to that the road salt and de-icing chemicals that come along with it, and things can get really ugly!!

Here's a few simple tips to help you protect your plants this winter.

**PLAN AHEAD:** The best way to protect plants from snow damage is to plan ahead before winter arrives. Make a mental note of where all of your plants are located so you can avoid them when it comes time to clear snow.

**DON'T PILE SNOW ON TOP OF PLANTS:** As we discussed, snow isn't bad for your plants... but piling huge heaps of snow on top of them can do some serious damage. Shoot for the lawn instead of your landscaping when scooping snow. Be especially careful around plants that are freshly planted this year.

**MARK THE AREA WITH STAKES:** Both you & the snowplow drivers will benefit from this. It's a good idea to mark the edges of your landscape beds, or mark where plants are... it can be hard to tell when we get a good amount of snow! As a bonus, this will also protect your equipment from being harmed by accidentally hitting landscaping rocks or other hardscaping.

**WRAP SENSITIVE PLANTS:** Sometimes it's a good idea to add some extra protection to your plants & trees. Tree wrap is ESSENTIAL for young tree survival in the winter. Wrapping all the way up from the bottom of your tree to the first set of branches will protect your young tree from sun scald, winter burn, frost crack, & critters who are hungry for that fresh tree bark. Rose Huts are also a great option for covering your roses & even some younger shrubs. The huts are great for keeping heavy heaps of snow from damaging your plants & also can provide insulation from icy winds & freezing temperatures.

**KEEP SALT OFF:** Be extra cautious when scooping & snow blowing if you use salt or chemicals on your driveway & sidewalks. Make sure not to put this snow on top of any plants... The salt can cause serious dehydration to your plants by pulling the moisture out of the roots.

**DON'T TRY TO REMOVE HEAVY SNOW OFF PLANTS:** Trying to remove heavy snow from plants by shaking or hitting them can cause even more damage than the snow itself. Frozen branches and stems are very brittle and tend to break easier in the winter. If you feel like you need to remove the snow, use your hands or a broom to gently brush off the snow.