



By Shayne Newman

"When buildings leak, the environmental, structural and long term performance can be just the beginning of serious problems and liabilities."

With the winter season here, homeowners should be thinking about how to best protect their plants, trees and shrubs from snow, ice, winds and winter temperatures. Taking steps to "winterproof" lawns and landscapes will help to minimize potential damage and get the landscape ready for the spring season.

The following are winter care tips from PLANET, the national association of landscape professionals:

PROTECTING PLANTS, TREES AND SHRUBS DURING THE WINTER SEASON

MULCH TREES, PLANTS AND SHRUBS.

Mulch around trees, plants and shrubs to add extra protection for winter. Mulching is an important control for erosion and loss of water and a 2-inch layer of mulch will reduce water loss and help maintain uniform soil temperature around the roots.

KEEP PLANTS WELL-HYDRATED.

Evergreen plants continue to transpire, or lose water through their leaves, even in the winter. Plants kept well-hydrated until a hard freeze have a better chance for survival.

PROTECT EVERGREENS, PLANTS AND TREES.

Use antitranspirants that are applied to plants and trees to help reduce water loss from plant leaves (similar to sweating.) Burlap wrapping may also be used to shield valuable evergreens from salt spray and winter winds. Tie branches together that may be susceptible to snow loads. For advice on how to protect plants from winter weather, consult a landscape or tree care professional.

CUT GRASS SHORTER.

Although during the growing season lawns should be cut to 3 inches to 3.5 inches, the final lawn cutting should be 2 inches to 2.5 inches.



WATCH OUT FOR WINTER WARM SPELLS.

If plants are covered with burlap or other wrappings, consider ventilating them during the day and re-covering them at night.

USE CARE WHEN SHOVELING, PLOWING OR BLOWING SNOW.

Place posts with reflectors next to plants so they are well-marked; then snow won't be shoveled on top of the plants. Consider clearing snow away from walks, driveways with a shovel or snow-blower instead – it will reduce the amount of de-icing products needed.

REMOVE BROKEN LIMBS.

If a limb breaks due to snow, ice and wind, have it removed as soon as weather permits; it will help the tree or shrub heal better as the warmer temperatures approach. Damaged trees are more prone to disease.

NEVER SHAKE BRANCHES.

Homeowners should gently brush off snow. Shaking the limbs may break them. Use hands to scoop the snow away from plants to protect them from settling snow.

PRUNE MOST PLANTS IN WINTER.

The late dormant season is best for most pruning in many regions. Pruning in late winter, before spring growth begins, leaves fresh wounds exposed for only a short amount of time before new growth begins.



MINIMIZE SALT DAMAGE.

Salt and melting agents for snow and ice can damage plants and trees by drawing water away from their roots. Get rid of extra salt by flushing the soil out with plenty of water.

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Peter S. Sachs - Owner's request for accommodation...

workers who change jobs, HIPAA also introduced provisions that protect the privacy of health data and records. The law gives patients privacy rights over their own health information and sets rules regarding who can access that information. Significantly, however, it does not state that medical information may never be requested of a patient. In fact, a large number of organizations are exempted from the requirements of the law, including many life insurers, employers, schools, state agencies and municipal offices. HIPAA is a powerful law, but one with a very narrow application. And, the law is not relevant when a resident is requesting that a housing provider accommodate a handicap. Case law makes clear that an association may request specific types of medical information, including a physician's letter, that allows the association to accurately judge whether or not an accommodation should be granted. The accommodation may be withheld if the requesting party does not provide sufficient proof of a handicap.

Associations should feel comfortable consulting with their counsel on any FHAA accommodation request, and should realize that, while the ADA and HIPAA are frequently cited by requesting residents and their attorneys, these laws are rarely applicable to such requests. Under the FHAA, associations have every right to ask specific questions that will allow them to confirm the existence of a claimed handicap and the need for an accommodation.

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