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Winter Weather Tree Tips

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This looks to be shaping up as a tough winter for us and our trees. Lots of snow and ice are predicted for the Hoosier state and this can be a challenge for our trees and shrubs.

After a heavy snowfall, protect your trees and property with these simple tips:

Do not shake limbs to try to remove snow or ice.

When you find your trees are bending or drooping as a result of ice or snow accumulation, your first instinct is probably to shake the branches or knock the weight off with a broom or something similar. This may cause worse damage or actually cause the branch to snap off. Stop right there! Healthy tree branches are flexible, so knocking off the accumulation of snow or ice accretion may cause them to “snap” back, potentially damaging their food and water transport system. The results of the damage may not be evident until next spring.

Trees that tend to suffer the worst damage as a result of snow and ice are upright evergreens, like arborvitae and juniper, and clump trees, like birch. And, when it comes to ice, age does not make a tree stronger; younger trees are better at actually overcoming damage in ice storms.



Snow weighing down spruce branches



Ice accretion on hawthorn branches



Limbs bending from ice loading

Safely remove broken limbs.

Broken and hanging branches can be a threat to people and property. If a limb breaks off from the weight of ice or snow and remains in the tree canopy, have it removed and the remaining stub properly pruned to the branch collar as soon as weather allows. The tree will recover better when properly pruned. For undamaged limbs bending under the weight of ice or snow, don't prune as a means of correcting the situation. Be patient. It takes time for wood fibers in the limbs to return to its natural position.

Always be mindful of walking or parking under branches loaded down by snow or ice as they may snap and fall, causing injury or damage. If a limb breaks and becomes entangled in power lines, notify your utility company immediately. Never approach a

downed power line or a branch touching a utility line.

Hire a Professional.

If there is substantial damage to your tree, have an arborist examine damaged branches and limbs for signs of weakness and injury for reparations. It is best to always hire an ISA Certified Arborist. To find an arborist in your area, visit the website, www.treesaregood.org

How can you help prevent ice damage to trees? Proper pruning is one way. Particularly important is the removal of poor branch attachments and weak branch structure in the tree, prior to winter. For more information on pruning, download the publication, [Tree Pruning Essentials](#).

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