



ask the landscape professional

Linda K. Lillie of Sprigs & Twigs

Welcome to my weekly series!

Feel free to send me questions you'd like to have me answer and I will do my best to address the ones of most general interest. Email or mail your questions to:

info@sprigsandtwigs.net or

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Question #1 this Week: *Should I be concerned when snow piles up on my garden beds?...Robin*

Linda's Answer: Your garden should be perfectly fine with lots of snow on it. You do need to inspect and brush snow off of any shrubs that have heavy snow loads to prevent breakage or damage; otherwise, if the shrub is buried in a snow pile, it's fine. A blanket of snow serves as an insulator for the roots of plants which helps minimize any root damage caused when the ground freezes deeply. In addition to insulating the soil, a snow cover also helps stabilize the swing in ground temperatures and minimize soil heaving that result from freezing and thawing cycles. Heaving can break plants and root systems. Snow cover also keeps moisture in the soil, because low humidity and winter winds cause the soil to dry out rapidly. Snow cover is also a great way to add moisture back into your garden. Unlike heavy rains, which can saturate the soil and runoff on the surface, slower melting snow can let more moisture soak back into the ground. You can actually "water" your garden by shoveling more snow onto it; the garden will thank you in the spring when the snow melts. **CAUTION-** be very careful not to break any shrubs with a pile of snow and never use the snow from your walkway if you have used a salt-based de-icer because it can harm your plants. Walkway de-icers are always problematic. All of the various de-icing materials available that have any type of salt are harmful to your soil, plants, lawn and concrete walkways, some much worse than others. There are a few things you can do: 1) switch to a gritty material like sand or kitty litter, 2) if you must use salt-based de-icers now, avoid using them after late February, just before the plants are starting to come alive in the spring. The de-icers can cause the most damage at that time, and 3) flush your plants and soil with water as soon as the ground thaws to dilute the salt. Some plants may not make it, but that is the best you can do. I can help you with salt-tolerant plant replacements, if needed, in the spring.



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Linda K. Lillie has been President of Sprigs & Twigs, Inc. for the last 19 years. She is a graduate of Connecticut College in Botany, an accredited NOFA Organic Land Care Professional, a Connecticut Master Gardener and a national award winning landscape designer for her design and installation projects..

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