



ask

Celebrating 21 Years!
the landscape professional
Linda K. Lillie of Sprigs & Twigs

Welcome to my weekly series!

Email or mail your questions to: info@sprigsandtwigs.net or
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Thank you Readers for Voting Sprigs & Twigs
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Question this Week: Recently, I bought an ice melt product which said it was "eco-friendly" and listed four ingredients ending in the word "chloride". No other chemicals were listed on the label. I was seeking to purchase a de-icing product which would not hurt my gardens or lawn and would not end up in the Long Island Sound via the storm drains on the street either. I'm not sure about the product I bought... Jenna Messier, NOFA - Organic Land Care Program Director

Linda's Answer:

I reached out to Joe Magazzi, President of Green Earth Ag & Turf, located in Branford, Connecticut, to ask him about how to select an eco-friendly product and how to differentiate among the products available. Here is what Joe had to say:

"Advertising environmentally-friendly in the ice-melt world is a bit sketchy...it is largely unregulated and ice-melts aren't required to list their ingredients like fertilizers or most other products we put down on our plants, trees and turf. Most ice-melts are made from rock salt (which is sodium chloride or common table salt), so it can be organic or all natural, but it is also corrosive and can kill turf, trees and plants due to the salt toxicity caused by the sodium. For that reason, the best ice melts are potassium-based. Potassium is actually a required lawn nutrient, so if anything, it will have a minor fertilizer value (although you wouldn't use it as a fertilizer). Potassium is also the best for pets...it does not burn their paws, and it is better for concrete as it does not freeze and thaw as readily - which is what causes the damage. Besides the burning, the sodium chloride would not be a huge environmental pollutant. Some ice melts, however, contain ammonia, nitrates or urea. All of these molecules are basically nitrogen sources. These ice melts will have the same environmental impact as over-fertilizing with nitrogen does. In fact, more so as the nitrogen is less likely to absorb into the frozen soil or vaporize and is thus more likely to run into our water systems in the winter, thus becoming a source of eutrophication. (Eutrophication occurs when runoff of too many nutrients, like nitrogen and phosphorous, enter our waterways and overstimulate the production of algae, plankton and other microorganisms. These aquatic organisms can take over and deplete waterways of oxygen.) For that reason, I suggest potassium-based ice melts since they have the least impact on people, animals, all things green, water and the environment in general."



Sprigs & Twigs uses a potassium based product for ice melting as Joe recommends.

Today's "Ask the Landscape Professional" has been reprinted with permission from the AOLCP (Accredited Organic Land Care Professionals) eNews January 2017 edition. My thanks to Jenna Messier and Joe Magazzi for their contributions. Sprigs & Twigs currently has ten AOLCPs on staff and will be training several more in February; no other company has as many accredited organic professionals.

Linda K. Lillie has been President of Sprigs & Twigs, Inc. for the last 21 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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