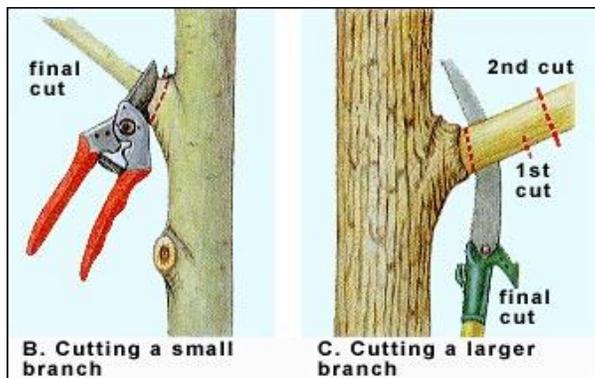


Heavy snow on trees

With nine months of potential snow here in Alberta, we frequently get heavy snow in early fall or late spring that can greatly affect our trees and shrubs. Most of them are well adapted to winter conditions but having sudden heavy snow when trees have not completed or are just starting their growing season can be devastating. Most of our spruces, pines, and fir have flexible branches and shed snow relatively easy, but coniferous trees often have their tops broken by heavy snow. Trees with a narrow vertical crown: Swedish poplar, junipers, and many shrubs, and with narrow upright branching are highly susceptible to damage from wet snow. The best way deal with this is to very gently remove snow with a broom or a small pole. Do not shake the tree or shrub as branches can easily get broken. If snow or ice is frozen to a branch don't do anything until it thaws or melts off. Do not use any salt deicing spray as salt is one of the most common killers of trees and shrubs in Alberta shelterbelts or residential areas. Also don't use heat of any kind to melt ice or snow. If there is no significant damage and the tree is still holding **let the snow melt naturally – leave the tree alone.**

If your trees and shrubs are damaged; pruning is your only option. There are several steps to consider:

- **Safety** –inspect your tree for any power line contact. Look around trees and carefully inspect them from a safe distance. Stay away from the trees and call the power company to deal with them.
- If you have heavy broken branches or large trees, call a certified arborist to deal with them. Broken hanging heavy branches can fall in a slight wind or cold and you can be easily injured.
- Do not try to use a ladder to remove snow or broken branches as it is very slippery and you can be easily injured.
- Do proper pruning which includes three way cut of larger branches to remove the heavy weight of the branch. Do the undercut first, then remove the heavy weight as the second cut. The third, final cut should not damage the tree branch collar.



- Small branches less than 2 inches in diameter can be removed with one cut.
- Putting wound paint or dressing on the cut has no effect.
- Do not leave any stubs when pruning.
- Make cuts with sharp tools.

Overall our trees and shrubs are adapted to winter conditions, and in the few instances where we get heavy wet snow or ice you may not need to do anything expect monitor the situation. Always keep safety in mind. Enjoy the trees in our winter wonderland – or, if it is early spring, enjoy the fact that summer is around the corner!



Photo: Winter damage on Swedish poplar- Quinton Beaumont

For more information:

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