

GARDEN COLUMN FOR THE SALISBURY POST
Darrell Blackwelder
February 1, 2007

Sidewalks, driveways and entryways were treacherous earlier this week with the icy, winter weather mix. Weather patterns over the past few years could give us more of this type of weather in the weeks ahead.

There are a few new products on the market used for rapid ice melt. "Ice Melt" is a relatively new product that works well and is safe to use around many plant materials and turf. Another product that contains encapsulated liquid magnesium works to melt ice and snow on asphalt and concrete drives and walkways.

Rock salt is an older product that should be applied sparingly. Avoid placement near valuable landscape materials where run-off could potentially damage woody plant material and lawns. Normally two or more light salt applications are no cause for concern. Snow, ice and normal rainfall normally leach light salt applications through the soil preventing plant damage.

Salt damage to plants is similar to over-fertilization. Leaf margins and tips easily burn or scorch with eventual defoliation.

Extreme salt damage manifests itself quickly, in just a few days.

Try to keep salt granules as far away from trees and shrubs as possible when applying to sidewalks or roads. Follow instructions and apply only as needed.

Sand is also an effective salt-substitute. Actually, sand does not melt ice or hard packed snow, but provides traction to prevent slipping. It's messy and somewhat unattractive; however, sand stays on the surface of the ice through its duration and is easily swept off when sidewalks dry.

Darrell Blackwelder is an extension agent in charge of horticulture with the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service in Rowan County.