

Fall and Winter Dangers, Threatening your Trees

We have made it through the summer heat, wind and hail storms, yet there are still hazards that lie ahead that can be even more damaging to the health and longevity of our trees.

Early season snows that arrive while trees are still in leaf cause more damage to the trees in our yards than anything else that we have to worry about. Trees that have not received enough water in the summer and fall are especially vulnerable to breakage and excessive damage. Because these trees have not received enough water they are more brittle. They are less flexible and break easier.

Trees that have had insufficient water are less healthy, they have less stored energy so when they do break they are less able to cope with and repair the broken areas.

(Explanation- when not enough water gets up to the leaves, leaf activity shuts down. The leaves produce carbohydrates through photosynthesis. The carbohydrates supply the food or energy for the tree to carry on their various functions. When leaf activity which includes carbohydrate production shuts down the tree has less energy to work with and is stressed and less healthy.)

If you have young trees you can go out during the snow storm and gently shake some of the snow off of the leaves. You can also use a garden hose to spray the snow off the leaves with water. This method works well as long as temperatures are above 25 degrees Fahrenheit.

Keeping trees pruned with good structure is very important to reduce snow load breakage. A Certified Arborist can determine weak and defective areas in your tree's structure and either prune to protect those weak areas or in some cases eliminate the defective area all together. Young trees should be inspected and pruned regularly to maintain good structure as they grow and to avoid major problems later on.

Sun Scalding is another serious problem in Colorado during the winter especially with young trees. Wrapping the trunk of young trees during the winter is very important. *(Explanation- when the weather turns cold the sun is at a much lower angle in the sky and shines more directly on the trunks of trees. During the day the sun can warm up the south facing trunk of a tree, this can cause water and sap to start to flow. When the sun sets if the outside temperature is cold enough it can freeze the water that has started to flow under the bark of the tree and this freezing can rupture cells in the cambium layer and kill the damaged area of tree trunk, this is called "sun scalding". The wrapping of the trunk keeps the sun from shining directly on the trunk. The goal is to shade the trunk of the tree and that way keep a more even temperature on the bark. Loosely wrapped "tree wrap" or cardboard folded around the tree that is a light color works the best.)*