

## **SALT DAMAGE TO LANDSCAPING**

*Winter presents us with the dilemma of how to deal with ice on the roads, driveways and sidewalks. Before you use salt on your walks or driveway consider these facts:*

### **The Effects of Using Salt**

As soon as salt does its job it runs with the melted snow onto your lawn and landscaping. Piles of plowed snow that remain for some time contain a large concentration of salt. Too much salt in the environment is like too much salt in the diet. Nationwide 10 million tons of salt are used on our roads in an average winter. On heavily traveled highways 80 tons per lane mile can be used in a year. Salt is persistent, its components linger long into the summer, and its reach beyond the area of application can be 400 feet.

Salt can contaminate water sources. It corrodes cars, concrete, asphalt, cables, porches and steps. It is deadly to plants—depriving them of water, nutrients, damaging the soil around the roots, weakening resistance to cold and reducing vigor.

### **Here are common salt injury symptoms:**

- scorching of leaf margins
- stunted, yellow foliage
- browning of needles from the tips back, often on one side (facing the road, driveway or walk).
- twig dieback
- early fall color

### **The Use of Salt by Montgomery DPW**

Montgomery Road crews now use a salt and water brine solution to reduce salt content and material drift. It is applied in advance of storms to roads and delays freezing, keeping roads safer.

Whenever possible, CMA (calcium magnesium acetate), a biodegradable chemical, or calcium chloride is being substituted for sodium chloride in parks and landscaped areas.

### **Advice to Homeowners**

The cumulative effect of deicing on private properties can be as great as that of deicing on public roads. To reduce this effect try the following:

- remove the snow as soon as possible, before it becomes compacted and icy
- clear the snow well beyond the width of the driveway or walk, so later melting does not form ice on the surface
- use cat litter, coarse sand, grit, gravel, cinders, or fertilizer (in moderation)
- try CMA (calcium magnesium acetate/
- clear salt-contaminated snow from the roots of your trees.
- if you must use salt (choose calcium chloride over sodium chloride) plant salt tolerant species near driveways and walks

### **What's on the Market?**

#### **Sand, grit, gravel, fertilizer**

**Salt** is sold under various names: sodium chloride, rock salt, deicing salt.

**Calcium chloride** somewhat less corrosive

**CMA** (calcium magnesium acetate)  
biodegradable agent