

# **Branching Out – Tree Care Tips**

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## **Winter Stresses on Trees and Shrubs!**

Heavy snow and ice, high winds and huge fluctuations in temperature, can damage cherished trees and shrubs in our landscapes!

### **What happens in winter and how can we avoid it:**

- *Branches of trees can break due to excessive weight of ice or snow.* This can be avoided by proper pruning. Proper pruning encourages the formation of the strongest possible branches and branch attachments. When pruning alone isn't enough, to ensure proper branch attachment, cables can be installed to support a weakened part of the tree. If cables and braces are installed in accordance to the "Tree Care Industry Association" standards they will not cause harm to the tree, however inspection of these support systems by a certified arborist every 2-3 years must be part of the maintenance program.
- *Winter winds cause evergreens to lose moisture from their needles.* Even some deciduous trees suffer from winter drying. If water is not available as moisture is drawn from living cells, permanent damage will result. This can be avoided by planting hardy species, watering plants adequately in the fall, and mulching correctly to insulate the soil and roots from severe cold and drying. Having antidesiccants applied to susceptible evergreens, will all aid in the prevention of dry evergreens come spring.
- *Winter sun causes cracking and sun scalding.* On sunny days the trunk and main limbs can warm to 15 degrees higher than the air temperature. As soon the sun's rays stop reaching the stem, its temperature plummets, causing injury or permanent damage to the bark. The two main types of injury are known as sun scald and frost cracking. The effects of sun scald and frost cracking can be reduced by sound arboricultural practices to maintain overall health; in addition covering the trunks of young, susceptible trees with a suitable tree wrap will help with the prevention of sunscald and frost cracking.

### **Winter is the best time to prune**

Most skilled arborists prefer and often insist on pruning trees when dormant. With no leaves on the tree, we are better able to evaluate its architecture and spot dead or diseased branches. During the dormant season the ground is typically frozen, thus damage to the turf underneath the tree from falling limbs and tire tracks is negligible. This is also the only time to check and deal with egg masses, such as that from the Gypsy Moth. We can also evaluate the trees for overwintering disease, insect and other damage.

Winter can be a very stressful time for our trees and shrubs. If you have additional questions or would like information on tree care, please contact a professional, certified arborist. Gluck Tree Care, Inc. of Random Lake employs only certified arborists. Certified arborists must first pass a very comprehensive examination and then must follow stringent safety and performance standards, and must be dedicated to ethics and quality in business practices. Companies employing certified Arborists are required to have insurance and have a trained and professional staff. 2008 is the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Gluck Tree Care, in Random Lake.