

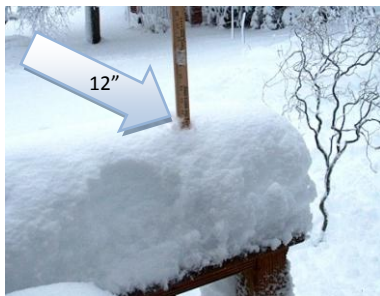
Yard and Garden - 02-18-2012 - Ted Griess / Extension Horticulture Assistant

Bad things often accompany good things. An example supporting this statement was the recent snowstorm that occurred in Central Nebraska during the late evening of Friday, February 3, 2012, and early morning hours of Saturday, February 4, 2012.

At least twenty-four hours before the storm arrived, weather forecasters were projecting snow accumulations in excess of fourteen inches. Blizzard-like conditions were on the way. Viewers were advised to stock up on supplies, stay indoors and avoid traveling — a time to hunker down.

About ten o'clock p.m. on Friday, I stuck my nose out the front door and noticed only a skiff of snow covering the landscape. Things appeared somewhat normal. It was then I recall saying, "Hmm, looks like the weatherman made the wrong prediction."

Wow, was I wrong! When we arose early Saturday morning, one quick glance out the living room window revealed an entire landscape blanketed in snow. The north wind was howling with such force that I could barely see my neighbors' home directly across the street. I quickly lit the fireplace while Rita prepared a pot of coffee. Huddled together, safe and warm, there we sat staring out our living room window marveling at the beauty and power of Mother Nature.



Once on the deck, Rita placed a yardstick into the snow; it quickly sank, stopping at the twelve-inch mark. The entire backyard was brilliantly draped in a cloak of white, freshly-fallen snow.

It was then I noticed a number of smaller twigs from our corkscrew willow tree lying atop the snow while others dangled from broken branches high in the tree. Many of our shrubs, both deciduous and coniferous, were deeply buried. They appeared to be nothing more than mounds of snow protruding from the landscape. I was especially saddened to see our ten-year-old crimson birch tree so heavily weighted down with snow that it was lying horizontally on the ground.

By mid-morning, the storm weakened. The winds settled, and the sun began to peek through the gray skies. It was time to bundle-up, head outdoors and survey the damage. With camera in hand, I attempted to exit the backdoor leading to our deck. Feeling the resistance of the snow against the door, I pushed hard.





Although grateful for all the good moisture this beautiful snow provided, I could also see it was causing assorted problems by sticking to everything. As it accumulated on the branches of trees and shrubs, many bent to the ground or broke under the weight. Quickly, Rita and I

trudged through the deep snow to our birch tree. Together we grasped it by its trunk. Gently, we shook it removing most of the snow from its branches. Immediately it moved upright reaching an angle of approximately forty-five degrees. The question was would it return to normal. Only time would tell.



Long ago, I learned that when a situation like this occurs, it is best to remove the snow from weighted down trees and shrubs as soon as possible following a storm. Newly fallen snow is generally lighter and easier to remove. A brushing action works best and if shaking is necessary, do so by grabbing the trunk and not the branches. Shaking the branches often results in breaking more than saving. Furthermore, the longer the snow remains on the tree branches, the more apt it will be to freeze and remain there, causing more damage. Unfortunately, little can be done to prevent ice damage. If ice or snow is frozen on the branch and will not brush off easily—**let it melt naturally**.

If tree limbs break due to the weight of ice or snow, remove the broken limbs as soon as weather permits. If a wound has a clean edge instead of ragged tears, it will heal more quickly and have fewer potential problems with insects or disease.

Yes, it is true; bad things can accompany good things; but fortunately, sometimes bad things are only temporary. Today, our birch tree stands tall.

