



Choosing the Right Deicer this Winter

How to be Environmentally Friendly and Safe at the Same Time



Learn how to make special pinecones that will brighten your fireplace this winter!



Who won prizes in this year's Natural Wonders Photo Contest? Look inside to find out.



To find out what local animal belongs to this tail read our Critter Corner.

Deicing your sidewalk and driveways may seem to be a harmless way to make our pathways safer in the winter months, but in fact the salt could be damaging our local waterways and nearby vegetation. When snow and ice melt after a winter storm, they cause an increase in stormwater runoff. Stormwater is the water that runs over rooftops, roads, driveways, bare soil, and other surfaces during rainstorms or when snow melts. As stormwater is created from the melting snow and ice, it travels on top of your driveways and sidewalks and collects and transports the deicer materials on the ground to a stormwater drain in your neighborhood that leads directly to local streams and rivers. The chlorides that make up the deicers can harm aquatic wildlife, affect nearby plant growth in your yard, and can remain trapped in your soils.

Luckily there are alternatives to conventional rock salt deicers that are easy to purchase and will also help in keeping our pathways safe! Here are some helpful tips that will keep your pavements clear and local streams cleaner!

Read the labels and know what you are using!

It is always a good idea to know what is in your deicer so be sure to check the label on the product before you buy it! Most rock salts tend to be made of sodium chloride, but other salts can be just as damaging.

Shovel the snow and then apply the deicer!

Removing freshly fallen snow before it has a chance to freeze and harden into ice is one of the most effective ways of

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Deicer

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keeping your pavement clear. Deicers work better when there is only a thin layer of ice or snow and will provide better traction for your car tires.

Less is more!

If you are using traditional deicers, read the directions and learn the recommended application rate. Using more salt than this will not make the ice melt faster; it will only end up costing you more money and will be washed away by the stormwater hurting the environment!

Use some sand!

Mixing sand in with the deicer will aid in melting the snow and ice and cut down on the amount of salt you need to use. Sand and regular kitty litter will also add traction to the surface!

Learn about alternatives.

Look for products carrying the “Design for the Environment” label. This mark allows consumers to quickly identify and choose products that are safer for their families and also help protect the environment. This EPA program uses scientific information to identify products such as deicers that are designed to be safer for the environment and to help you choose products and services. In 2010, Americans using products with the DfE label cut the use of harmful chemicals by more than 600 million pounds. Look for the DfE label to find products with the safest possible ingredients and help protect the environment.



Critter Corner

Snapping Turtle



The snapping turtle enjoys areas by fresh or brackish water with soft mud bottoms and abundant vegetation. It likes to bury itself in the mud with only its eyes and nostrils exposed. During the winter months, the snapping turtle will retreat beneath an overhanging mudbank, under vegetation or inside a muskrat lodge.



Snapping turtles have massive heads with powerful, hooked jaws. They strike viciously when lifted from water or teased and can inflict a serious bite. These turtles are best left alone.



Females lay as many as 83 eggs during one mating season. Each egg is guided into a deep cavity until hatching by alternating movement of the hind feet.

Snapping turtles are excellent swimmers. Individuals displaced 2 miles have returned to their capture sites within several hours. They may live for up to 80 years or more.

Natural Wonders Photography Contest

Finding the Beauty of Southern New Castle County

Barbara Augustson



GRAND PRIZE WINNER: "Hole in the Snow" by Barbara Augustson

The 2nd Natural Wonders Photography Contest provided some great photos showcasing the beauty of southern New Castle County. At the October 6 awards ceremony at the Gibby Center for the Arts in Middletown, there was a wonderful celebration as participants and their families gathered to enjoy the winning photos. New this year was the Board of Directors Choice where the Board chose from photos that did not win in other categories those that would be best for the River Association's education and outreach projects. The photo contest received many striking images of southern New Castle County's rivers, native plants, and native wildlife.

The winners were as follows:

Category: Native Plants

1st Place: Jane Mruk, "Hot Pink New England Asters"

2nd Place: Dave Cadogan, "Cattails"

3rd Place: Jane Mruk, "Brown Eyed Susans"

Category: Waterscapes

1st Place: Barbara Augustson, "Hole in the Snow"

2nd Place: Dave Cadogan, "Geese on Pond"

3rd Place: Barbara Augustson, "Winter Waterscape"

Category: Native Wildlife

1st Place: Jane Mruk, "White-Breasted Nuthatch"

2nd Place: Dave Cadogan, "Flying Snow Goose"

3rd Place: Joan Mason, "Turkey Vulture in Winter"

Category: ARA Board of Directors Choice

1st Place: Rebecca Kern, "Skimmer"

2nd Place: Barbara Augustson, "Hummingbird"

3rd Place: Helen Downes, "Black Snake"

Grand Prize Winner:

Barbara Augustson, "Hole in the Snow"

Thank you to all that participated!

Serve Up Some Homemade Suet this Winter

Suet helps wild birds prepare for the coming winter, is easy to serve and spill-free.

Jane Mruk



This White-breasted Nuthatch is enjoying suet that has been spread on the bark of a tree.

- 1.5 cups lard
- 1.5 cups crunchy peanut butter
- 3 cups cornmeal
- 3 cups quick oatmeal
- 1-2 cups whole wheat flour

Heat lard and peanut butter enough so that you can combine them easily. Add the cornmeal, oatmeal and 1 cup of flour. Mix well. Mixture should be crumbly and not too moist. Add additional flour to achieve the desired consistency.

You can form logs or pour into a pan. Chill mixture. Once the mixture is set, you can cut it into the desired shape for your feeder.

NOTE: You can add various items like dried fruit or seeds. Make sure the fruit is in small pieces and the that seeds don't have shells. The suet mixture makes the shells too slippery for the birds to open!

Jane Mruk



A Red-bellied Woodpecker visits this Log Feeder loaded with suet.

Just for Fun

Pine Cones to Brighten Any Fire

(from Puddles and Wings and Grapevine Swings by Forte and Frank)

As the green and yellow flames shoot up from these specially treated pine cones, they'll surely bring extra warmth to everyone who toasts their toes by the open hearth.

What You Need:

Large Pine Cones
Rubber Gloves
Old Pillow Case
or Cheesecloth Bag
Newspapers
Mesh Vegetable Bags
or Paper Sacks
Table Salt and/or Borax
Water
Large Bucket

What to Do:

1. Put a pound of salt OR borax and a gallon of water into the bucket. NEVER MIX THE SALT AND BORAX. Salt will give you a yellow flame and borax a green flame. Wear the rubber gloves to protect your hands as you work.
2. Place a few cones at a time in the pillowcase. Dip them in the water mixture and soak thoroughly.
3. Drain the cones and spread them on newspapers to dry. Sometimes this takes several days, so don't rush.
4. When the cones are completely dry, they are ready to be packed in bags for storage. The mesh bags used for oranges and onions are perfect as they allow for air to circulate. If you don't have these, paper bags from the grocery store will do nicely.



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