

Tree Talk

Winter Hardiness

By now everyone probably agrees that we have had sufficient winter weather, but do our trees feel the same? Trees that thrive in our area can withstand temperatures as low as -40 F degrees, and some of our natives such as Aspen, and Birch can withstand even lower temperatures. The Aberdeen area hit -29 F below in February, although really cold to people and livestock, a piece of cake to most trees and shrubs. Some marginally hardy trees such as Norway Maple, Catalpa and Eastern White Pine can be affected by some of the low temperatures we have experienced. Signs and symptoms of affected trees are tip dieback and overall canopy decline in the spring and early summer.

One group of trees that are showing signs of stress and dieback this winter are evergreens, specifically pines and spruce trees. These trees are not browning and dying because of the extreme winter temperatures, but because they were stressed by high water tables and poorly drained soils last summer and entered the winter season in a vulnerable state. Trees should be left standing until spring and early summer to determine their overall health. Some evergreens may be affected by a phenomenon referred to as winter burn that can cause needle browning but will not kill the entire tree.

When planning to purchase and plant a tree, it is important to know what kind of soils and climate you have so intelligent decisions can be made when selecting tree species and varieties. Now is a good time to be thinking about spring tree planting. Local greenhouse and nurseries should be contacted now for your spring tree planting needs. Remember, diversity is a necessity when creating a healthy forest environment.

Please contact me for additional information or questions at forestry@aberdeen.sd.us or the city website at www.aberdeen.sd.us

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