

## **Garden Center** The All Season Gift and Garden Center 620 North 500 West Bountiful, Utah 801-292-0421

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## Salt, Fertilizer, or Ice Melter?

Most ice melters state they will not harm vegetation when used according to label directions. This can be misleading because there are many variables. 1. The amount of ice melter used. 2. How much snow and ice must be removed. 3. How many times per year ice melter will be applied. 4. Where the melted snow and ice go.

Do not use fertilizer, salt, or ice melter on any concrete less than 1 year old. Use sand, Utelite, kitty litter, or sawdust to control ice on new concrete. You can also mix sand, Utelite, kitty litter, or sawdust with other ice melters on older concrete to help increase their effectiveness and increase traction. When the temperature is extremely cold, no amount of Ice Melter will work. You have to try increasing traction to help prevent injuries, and wait for warmer weather for the ice to melt. Be sure you have a good door mat by each door because the sand, Utelite, kitty litter, and sawdust tend to stick to your shoes and will track inside the house each time you walk through the door.



De-icing salts are a vital part of winter driveway care, porch and step safety, and road maintenance. However, they can be harmful to most trees and shrubs along the roadside or next to porches or driveways. You would be amazed

how much salt you bring home with you on your car every time you go to the grocery store, or to work. This salt has to go somewhere, just try to make sure it doesn't end up in your flower gardens or on your shrubs.

Unfortunately, we have no control over the amount of salt used on the streets, or how much salt gets plowed onto the park strip. We can, however, control how



much salt or ice melter that we use on our sidewalks and driveways. All plants are affected by salt but some plants (especially the tender plants to your area) are more sensitive to salt damage than others.

Many people think the object of using ice melters is to MELT ALL THE ICE. Well, they are totally wrong!



Ideally, the ice melter will melt through the

ice, down to the concrete or other solid surface, where it breaks the bond between the pavement and the ice, so that the ice can be shoveled away.

Ice melters work poorly on gravel walks and drives, because there is no solid surface where they can work. They tend to go right through the ice, and into the gravel without having much effect.

Sodium chloride (table salt, rock salt, water softener salt) is the most common ice melter used. It is the type used on most roads. This ice melter is very effective and inexpensive. Common salt is effective as an ice melter above 15° F.



However, the sodium in this salt is harmful to plants, and can actually damage the soil. Many soils contain naturally high levels of sodium. This high sodium level is one of the main reasons gardeners in those areas have a hard time gardening in their yards. Their plants often struggle and some die from too much sodium.

High levels of sodium can make a soil become tight and unworkable, impeding root development. The soil may be either too hard or too slimy, because of



the excessive amount of sodium. Sodium also pulls water away from plant roots, making the plants die from the 'lackof-water'. Sodium accumulates in the soil and may build up from year to year until it finally reaches a harmful level.

You wouldn't add salt to your garden soils on purpose, so be careful that you don't accidentally add salt to your garden soil with the improper use of ice melter.

Sodium will also damage concrete, if used excessively. Take a look at many of the concrete roads, or at your own sidewalks, driveways and porches. Do they have pitted surfaces? This damage could be a direct result of salt, or ice melter damage.

Chloride, also a part of salt, can become a pollutant of

the water supply if large quantities of common salt are used.

**Ice Fighter Plus** is an excellent alternative to plain rock salt. It contains sodium chloride, however, Morgro Chemical Company has mixed a patented polymer coating, **Propolyice**<sup>TM</sup>, with



the salt which helps prevent damage to concrete. Propolyice inhibits water from penetrating into the concrete. By keeping the water out of concrete, the freezing-thawing damage caused by salt is reduced. Ice Fighter plus, with Propolyice, has been proven to reduce the freezing damage to concrete. If used correctly, this ice melter will not harm concrete nor will it kill most plants.

As with all ice melting products, it will increase the number of freeze-thaw cycles, the major cause of surface damage. A combination of factors such as quality, mixing, finishing, curing and porosity of the concrete will affect its durability. Individual situations differ. The user must determine the suitability before application. Applications of Ice Fighter plus, followed by quick removal of snow and ice, will lessen the possibility of damage.