UNDERSTANDING

Put Your Sidewalk and Driveway on a Low-Salt Diet

WHAT'S THE PROBLEM WITH GOOD OLD, NATURAL SALT?

Unfortunately salt (sodium chloride), even small amounts, leaches into surrounding soil changing its composition and making it hard for plants to survive. High concentrations of salt can damage and kill trees and other plants. Brown trees and shrubs along roadsides are evidence of this. Dried salt can also blow over the land seeping into groundwater and washing into lakes and streams destroying habitat for plants and animals. Salt is highly corrosive to paved surfaces, buildings, and cars.



And if that weren't enough, our pets suffer from the use of salt. When your pet's paws are exposed to salt, they lick it off and may end up ingesting toxic amounts of salt. Other de-icers may also be a problem for pets, so read the labels!



WHAT'S A SAFER ALTERNATIVE TO SALT?

What's a safer alternative? A de-icer is not a substitute for shoveling. Sorry! De-icers are actually more efficient if there is less snow in the way, and it is possible that obsessive shoveling could prevent the need for de-icers. But, this usually is not going to happen so we need to protect ourselves from slipping on walkways and the driveway.

Sand can be used for traction (not melting ice), but it needs to be swept up in the spring. Otherwise, it can clog storm drains in more urban areas and cause flooding. When sand reaches rivers and lakes, sand buries aquatic floor life and fills in natural habitats. Kitty litter and wood ash are not especially effective as, like sand, they do not melt ice and they tend to get messy when it warms up.

Unfortunately, there is no competitively priced safe alternative to salt. However, when purchased in small quantities, such as for a home, the price is much lower than the environmental impacts of salt. Calcium magnesium acetate (CMA) appears to be the best option. If you have large areas requiring de-icing, you might consider mixing salt with CMA or sand.

What can I do?

- » Clear snow early and often and before you use any de-icing product. NEVER put de-icer on top of snow.
- » Adopt the "Just Enough" principle putting down just enough de-icer to clear areas.
- » Apply de-icers evenly using a broadcast spreader rather than by hand.
- » Sweep up un-dissolved de-icer after a storm to re-use later.
- » Consider switching to a non-chloride de-icer.



SUSTAINA

What are the options?

De-lcer	Works to:	Cost relative to salt:	Advantages:	Disadvantages:
Sodium Chloride (rock salt)	15° F		Relatively low cost	Contains cyanide; chloride impact
Calcium Chloride	-25° F	3X more than salt	Can use lower amounts; no cyanide	Chloride impact
Potassium Acetate	-75° F	8X more than salt	Safer than salt for steel structures; performs very well; noncorrosive; biodegradable	Could cause slickness on pavement; lowers oxygen levels in water
Calcium Magnesium Acetate	25° F	20X more than salt	Less toxic; biodegradable	Subject to dilution and refreezing
Sand	No melting effect	Less than salt	Relatively low cost	Accumulates in streets and streams

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT

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