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Aftermath of 1983/84 Weather on Trees and Ornamentals by Dr. Paul M. Alexander ChemLawn Corporation

The combination of severe drought/heat stress during the summer of 1983 and intense cold during the following winter has resulted in adverse affects on various trees and ornamental shrubs. Much of this damage has already been seen in the form of outright death of such plants, but I am of the opinion that the most insidious form of this injury — **delayed** kill — is yet to come. There are several good reasons for my feelings on this point.

First of all, many of the plants affected by heat and lack of soil moisture last summer were severely weakened in terms of reduced root structure and premature leafdrop. These two factors, in turn, meant that carbohydrate reserves (stored food) were depleted and were not replenished before colder weather set in.

Secondly, after rainfall finally started again, many areas of the country were afflicted by **too much** rainfall. In these areas, soil oxygen was practically non-existent for several weeks. This further weakened many of those plants already under severe stress. They simply could not develop roots which were so badly needed, thus further depleting carbohydrate reserves. Many of these plants were doomed **before** the severe winter set in.

Thirdly, extreme low temperatures and high winds in December and January damaged the trunks, limbs and buds of the previously weakened plants. This was bad enough in itself, but the final blow was yet to come.

Very few areas of the country had a "normal" spring. Instead, widely fluctuating temperatures and rainfall during March, April and May added an additional adverse affect to the breaking of winter dormancy. In the upper South and in portions of the lower Midwest, many plants budded out in late March and April — only to face sub-freezing weather within a matter of one or two weeks (or less). No further discussion of what happened to those buds is needed.

Now, as we approach what we hope will be more favorable weather, it will be easy to assume that the worst is over and that we can get on with "business as usual". However, my years of experience in this field tell me otherwise. It is **extremely** probable that we will see many of these weakened plants initiate what appears to be strong, healthy, new growth. However, because of the depleted carbohydrate reserves, these new growth flushes will probably live for a month or more, then collapse very suddenly. This collapse (death) will occur when the limited supply of food reserves is exhausted — there will not have been enough time for photosynthesis to have replenished these badly needed food reserves.

In a nutshell, what I am saying is that all of us in the plant care business are going to see a fairly high rate of death among the trees and perennial ornamentals before this summer is over and that we need to understand **why** this has happened.

If you are in a position to be able to alert your owners and/or members of this probability, I believe it would be a good idea to do so as soon as possible. It is axiomatic that informed people are more understanding of such a situation if and when it occurs; this may make your particular situation a lot more livable.



Trying to Do the Job Alone (Response to Insurance Company) Submitted by Paul Voykin

I am writing in response to your request for additional information. In block number 8 of the accident form, I put "trying to do the job alone" as the cause of my accident.

You said in your letter that I should explain more fully, and I trust the following details will be sufficient.

I am a brick layer by trade. On the day of the accident I was working alone on the roof of a new 6-story building. When I completed my work, I found that I had about 500 pounds of bricks left over. Rather than carry the bricks down by hand, I decided to lower them in a barrel by using a pully which fortunately was attached to the side of the building at the 6th floor. Securing the rope at the ground level, I went up to the roof, swung the barrel out, and loaded the bricks into it. Then I went back to the ground and untied the rope, holding it lightly to insure a slow descent of 500 pounds of bricks.

You will note in block number 11 of the accident report that I weigh 135 pounds. Due to my surprise at being jerked off the ground so suddenly, I lost my presence of mind and forgot to let go of the rope. Needless to say, I proceeded at a rather rapid rate up the side of the building. In the vicinity of the 3rd floor, I met the barrel coming down. This explains the fractured skull, and broken collar bone. Slowed only slightly, I continued my rapid ascent, not stopping until the fingers of my right hand were two knuckles into the pulley. Fortunately, by this time I had regained my presence of mind, I was able to hold tightly to the rope, in spite of my pain.

At approximately the same time, however, the barrel of bricks hit the ground and the bottom fell out of the barrel. Devoid of the weight of bricks, the barrel then weighed approximately 50 pounds. I refer you again to my weight in block 11.

As you might imagine, I began a rapid descent down the side of the building. In the vicinity of the 3rd floor, I met the barrel coming up. This accounts for my 2 fractured ankles, and the laceration of my legs, and lower body area. The encounter with the barrel slowed me enough to lessen my injuries when I fell onto the pile of bricks, and fortunately only 3 vertebrae were cracked.

I am sorry to report, however, that as I lay there on the bricks in pain, unable to stand in watching the empty barrel 6 stories above me ... I again lost my presence of mind and let go of the rope. The empty barrel weighed more than the rope, so it came back down on me, and broke both my legs.

I hope I have furnished the information you have requested.

(1983/84 Weather Cont'd.)

I hope that all of you in the Chicago area will come through with flying colors this summer with respect to the trees and ornamentals on your properties. At this point in time, there is very little that can be done to change the situation. However, on those plants that are somewhat marginal in health, a light fertilization (from $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ pound nitrogen per 1,000 square feet of canopy area) as soon as possible, plus close attention to maintaining adequate soil moisture, may pull them through.

Good Luck!