

Weather bends, buries and breaks Pacific Northwest landscapes

by LESLEE JAQUETTE

SEATTLE, WASH.— Combine a November snowstorm with a Christmas snowfall of 16 inches, mix in a New Year's Eve windstorm and you have a Pacific Northwest landscape industry rushing to evaluate damage and calculate losses.

Seattle, in King County, as well as surrounding Washington State counties have been declared national disaster areas after heavy snow, flooding and mudslides caused \$250 million in damage.

"There's a ton to be done, but I'd rather not have the work than see the trees broken down," says Hendrikus Schraven of Hendrikus Schraven Landscape, Construction, Design, Inc., of Seattle.

"It will feel like blood money. I'd rather see everything survive."

Analyzing the effects of the worst series of storms in five years, Schraven estimates 40 percent of his mature nursery

Tree damage was the most visible sign of damage after wind storms hit the Seattle area. Wet snow added to the damage later.



plants are damaged. These plants run from \$2500 to \$5000, but will now need at least two years to recover. According to Schraven, one of his \$5000 pines was annihilated.

"Normally, we'd shake the snow off, but the sheer weight of the snow and ice snapped off four big limbs. Now there's nothing to do but wait and see."

Leafy trees carry the weight

Mike Moschatel, owner of Earthworks Landscape Services, Inc., of Seat-

tle, notes the November storm—which dropped around eight inches of wet snow—probably committed the worst damage due to leaves still remaining on the deciduous trees. The December snow was drier but in such quantities that the effects were almost identical.

After surveying 40 of his 150 clients' properties, Moshcatel reports half of those properties have significant damage, with most repair estimates falling in the \$1000 to \$1500 range. The most common damage includes trees with split trunks and lopped off tops. One of Moshcatel's commercial accounts—the local K-Mart—suffered badly when 13 of a row of 30-40 ft. maples split in half.

"These trees would cost \$20,000 each to replace, and no one's going to pay that," says Moshcatel. □

Some seed supplies hit by weather

While several seed companies in north central Oregon were barely affected by recent winter storms, one major seed producer experienced significant damage and lost production.

Jerry Pepin, general manager of Pick-Seed West, says the Tangent, Ore., company lost 10 percent of new tall fescue and perennial ryegrass as a result of heavy rain and snow over the Christmas holiday.

While this figure represents 25 to 30 percent of new plantings, the total amount of established field loss runs around two percent. Estimated total loss looks to be about three to five percent.

Pepin remembers that last year's perennial ryegrass crop was down due to equally disastrous weather. After two years of substantial flooding, Pepin estimates the 1997 crop could see

a price increase of as much as 10 to 12 cents per pound.

"It's a farming operation," says Pepin. "We take our chances with nature; growing grass is no different."

Tom Stanley, marketing director of TurfSeed, Hubbard, Ore., says the company seed supply is relatively untouched by the storms, with less than five percent damage to production fields.

Dave Nelson, executive secretary of the Oregon Seed Council in Salem, adds that his area also survived in good shape.

"Although some fields were inundated, the rain subsided soon enough to avoid submerging the plants for days or weeks," says Nelson. L. J.



Jerry Pepin: 'We take our chances with nature.'