NEW BRUNSWICK LANDSCAPING

Snow & Winter

Snow removal, ice management, winter damage prevention, and cold-weather property care in NB

15 Expert Answers from Landscape IQ

newbrunswicklandscaping.com/construction-brain

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Q1

How do I plan snow storage on my property?

Planning snow storage is crucial in New Brunswick where we receive 250-300cm annually. Poor snow placement can damage plants, create drainage issues when it melts, and block access routes throughout our long winter season.

Start by mapping your property's snow patterns. Walk around during the first major snowfall to see where wind naturally deposits snow and where it tends to blow clear. Prevailing northwest winds in NB create predictable drift patterns — typically against south and east-facing structures. Note where your municipality's plows deposit street snow, as this will be salt-contaminated and shouldn't drain into garden beds.

Designate primary storage areas in locations that won't interfere with spring activities. The best spots are typically the back corners of your property, away from septic fields, wells, and garden beds. Avoid placing snow where spring melt will flood your basement, driveway, or neighbor's property. Remember that a 6-foot snow pile can create a 2-foot deep puddle when it melts in March and April.

Protect your landscape from snow damage by identifying vulnerable plants now. Wrap upright evergreens like cedars and junipers in burlap to prevent snow load from splitting branches. Mark the location of small shrubs and perennials with tall stakes so they won't get buried and damaged by snow removal equipment. Create barriers around foundation plantings to deflect snow thrown by your snowblower.

Plan your removal strategy based on NB's variable winter weather. During heavy snowfall periods (often January-February), you'll need to move snow multiple times rather than just pushing it to the lawn edge. Invest in a good snow pusher for moving large volumes and a traditional shovel for lifting. If you're hiring snow removal, discuss storage locations upfront — professional operators need to know where they can safely pile snow without damaging underground utilities or landscaping.

Consider drainage implications for spring melt. Snow piled against your house can cause ice damming and basement flooding. Ensure storage areas slope away from structures and won't create standing water in spring. In clay soil areas like Fredericton, compacted snow can take weeks to infiltrate, so avoid placing large piles over septic systems or in low-lying areas.

Account for salt contamination from street snow and your own ice control products. Never pile salt-contaminated snow on lawn areas or garden beds — the salt will kill grass and damage plants when it melts. Designate a separate area for this contaminated snow, preferably where runoff goes to storm drains rather than your landscaping.

Hire a professional for properties with complex drainage, steep slopes, or extensive landscaping. Professional snow removal operators understand proper placement techniques and have equipment to move snow efficiently to appropriate storage areas. They can also help design a snow management plan that protects your landscape investment.

Need help finding a snow removal contractor? New Brunswick Landscaping can match you with local professionals who understand proper snow storage techniques for our Maritime climate.

Q2

How do I protect foundation plantings from heavy snow loads in NB?

Protecting foundation plantings from heavy snow loads in New Brunswick requires a combination of physical supports, strategic placement, and proactive snow management throughout the winter season. With NB averaging 250-300 cm of snowfall annually, plus periodic ice storms, the weight of accumulated snow and ice can crush, split, and permanently deform shrubs planted along house foundations.

The most effective physical protection is tying or caging upright evergreens before winter. Columnar arborvitae, upright junipers, and pyramidal cedars are especially vulnerable to splaying — where heavy snow forces branches apart, ruining the plant's form permanently. In late October or early November, wrap these shrubs with soft twine or nylon stocking material in a spiral from base to tip, gently drawing the branches together. Don't wrap so tightly that you compress the foliage — just enough to prevent branches from spreading under snow weight. For broader shrubs like yews and boxwood, build a simple A-frame shelter from plywood or lumber that sheds snow away from the plant.

Roof snow avalanches are one of the biggest threats to NB foundation plantings. When accumulated snow and ice slide off a roof all at once, they can snap branches, crush entire shrubs, and compact the soil around root zones. If you notice this happening regularly, install snow guards or snow rails on the roof above vulnerable plantings — these break up the sliding snow mass into smaller, less damaging pieces. Snow guards cost $5-15 each and are a fraction of the cost of replacing mature shrubs.

During winter, manage snow around foundation plantings actively rather than passively. After major snowfalls, gently brush heavy snow off shrubs with an upward sweeping motion using a broom. Never pull snow downward, as this breaks branches. For ice-coated plants, do not attempt to remove ice — let it melt naturally. The branches will bend but usually recover once the ice melts. If a branch does crack under ice or snow load, make a clean pruning cut back to the next lateral branch or bud in spring.

Consider your plant selection when landscaping near NB foundations. Choose flexible-branched species that can handle snow loads — Japanese yew, mugo pine, and many native NB shrubs like bayberry naturally shed snow well. Avoid brittle species like some ornamental cherry varieties near drip lines. Space foundation plantings at least 3 feet from the house wall to allow room for snow accumulation between the plant and the foundation, and to ensure adequate air circulation that prevents moisture damage. If your foundation plantings are already established in vulnerable positions, a professional landscape assessment ($100-200) can identify the highest-risk plants and recommend targeted protection strategies.

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Q3

What de-icing products are safe for lawns and gardens in New Brunswick?

The safest de-icing products for lawns and gardens in New Brunswick are calcium magnesium acetate (CMA) and potassium chloride, while rock salt (sodium chloride) is the most damaging and should be avoided near any plantings. Understanding the difference matters enormously in NB, where 250-300 cm of annual snowfall means you'll be applying de-icer dozens of times each winter, and the cumulative effect on soil and plants can be devastating.

Calcium magnesium acetate (CMA) is the gold standard for plant-safe de-icing. It's biodegradable, doesn't alter soil pH, and breaks down into calcium and magnesium — both beneficial soil nutrients. The downside is cost: CMA runs $25-40 per bag compared to $8-15 for rock salt. It's also less effective below -5°C, which limits its usefulness during NB's coldest stretches. Use CMA on walkways and patios adjacent to garden beds, especially near shallow-rooted plants like rhododendrons and azaleas that are already stressed by NB's acidic soils.

Calcium chloride is the next best option. It works to -30°C (important for NB's inland winters), generates heat as it dissolves to melt ice faster, and while it does add chloride to the soil, it's far less damaging than sodium chloride. It also requires less product per application. The calcium component can actually benefit NB's calcium-poor acidic soils in small quantities. Budget about $15-25 per bag.

Potassium chloride is another reasonable choice, as potassium is actually a plant nutrient. However, it only works to about -10°C and is less effective than calcium chloride in NB's deep cold snaps. It's best as a supplemental product for milder winter days.

Rock salt (sodium chloride) should be your last resort near any landscaping. Sodium destroys soil structure by displacing calcium and magnesium, creating compacted, poorly draining soil. In NB's already acidic, often clay-heavy soils, this effect is amplified. Sodium also directly damages plant roots and can kill grass within 2-3 feet of where it's applied. If you must use rock salt — and for budget reasons many NB homeowners do — apply it sparingly and only on hard surfaces well away from garden beds. In spring, flush heavily salted areas with generous watering to leach sodium below the root zone.

Sand and fine gravel provide traction without any chemical damage and are the most plant-friendly option of all. Many NB homeowners use a combination approach: sand for traction on most surfaces, with CMA or calcium chloride reserved for problem spots like front steps and steep walkway sections. Whatever product you use, apply the minimum amount needed — more is not better, and excess de-icer inevitably migrates into lawn and garden areas with meltwater.

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Q4

How do I prevent snow plow damage to my lawn in New Brunswick?

Preventing snow plow damage to your New Brunswick lawn starts with clear physical markers installed before the first snowfall in November, combined with choosing the right plow operator and setting explicit expectations about blade height. Plow damage is one of the most common spring lawn complaints in NB, where the 250-300 cm of annual snowfall means plows make dozens of passes across your property each winter.

Install driveway markers (delineator stakes) along both edges of your driveway and any lawn-bordered paths before the snow flies. Use 48-inch fiberglass or reflective stakes placed every 8-10 feet along curves and straight sections, and at every corner or transition point. Pound them at least 12 inches into the ground while it's still soft in October or early November — once the ground freezes to NB's 1.2-1.5 metre frost depth, you won't be able to install them. Reflective stakes cost $3-7 each and are visible in headlights during early-morning and late-night plow runs. This simple step eliminates the majority of plow-related lawn damage.

Talk to your plow operator about blade height and shoe settings. Plow shoes (small metal feet on the blade's bottom edge) should hold the blade 0.5-1 inch above the pavement surface. This leaves a thin layer of snow that can be managed with de-icer but prevents the blade from catching on asphalt seams, raised edges, or uneven surfaces and gouging into adjacent lawn areas. Some operators run without shoes to give a cleaner scrape, but this dramatically increases the risk of turf damage, especially at driveway edges and turnaround areas.

The turnaround zone is where most lawn damage occurs. If your plow operator turns around on your lawn rather than backing out of the driveway, request that they change their pattern. On NB properties with limited turnaround space, consider widening the gravel or paved area at the end of your driveway by 3-4 feet on each side to give the plow room to maneuver without leaving the hard surface.

Protect lawn edges near the road from municipal plows by placing large, visible rocks or timber at the property line. Municipal plows push enormous volumes of snow and have no way to see where the road shoulder ends and your lawn begins under 2 feet of snow. Boulders or pressure-treated timbers at the lawn edge serve as both a visual and physical barrier.

If damage does occur, resist the urge to fix it in early spring while the ground is still soft. Wait until mid-April or later when the soil has firmed up, then rake out the torn areas, add topsoil as needed, and overseed with a mix suited to NB's climate. For larger gouged areas, lay sod for instant repair. Spring lawn repair after plow damage typically costs $100-300 if you do it yourself, or $200-500 if you hire a landscaper. When signing a seasonal snow removal contract ($600-1,500 in NB), include a clause requiring the operator to repair any turf damage in spring.

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Q5

When should I sign up for a residential snow removal contract in NB?

You should sign up for a residential snow removal contract in New Brunswick by early to mid-October to lock in the best rates and guarantee service availability for the winter season. The best snow removal companies in NB fill their residential routes by late October, and waiting until the first snowfall — which can come as early as late October in northern NB and November in the south — often means paying premium rates or being placed on a waitlist with no guarantee of timely service.

Seasonal contracts in New Brunswick typically run from November 1 through April 15, covering the full snow season. Pricing ranges from $600-1,500 for residential driveways, depending on driveway length, whether walkways and steps are included, and frequency of service. A standard two-car driveway (20-30 feet long) with front walkway typically falls in the $800-1,200 range for the season. This usually covers unlimited plowing events with a trigger depth of 5-7 cm (2-3 inches) of snowfall.

Understand the two main contract types before signing. Per-push contracts charge you each time the plow comes, typically $30-75 per visit depending on driveway size. This can be cheaper in light snow years but expensive in heavy ones — and NB averages 250-300 cm annually, which means 20-30+ plow events in a typical winter. Seasonal flat-rate contracts give you unlimited service for a fixed price, providing budget certainty regardless of how much snow falls. For most NB homeowners, the seasonal contract is the better value and eliminates the stress of watching costs climb during heavy snowfall weeks.

When evaluating snow removal companies, ask specific questions. What is their trigger depth — do they come at 5 cm or wait until 10 cm? What are their response time guarantees after snowfall ends? Do they service your area in the early morning before you need to leave for work, or are you mid-route and might not be cleared until noon? Do they include de-icing salt or sand application, or is that an add-on? What happens if they damage

your lawn, garden beds, or mailbox — do they carry liability insurance and will they repair damage in spring?

Also clarify the contract's end-of-season provisions. NB can get significant snowfalls into April, and some contracts end March 31, leaving you uncovered during late-season storms. Look for contracts that run through April 15 or specify service continues until the final snowfall regardless of date. Ask about ice storm provisions as well — NB's periodic ice storms can create dangerous conditions that require different treatment than routine snowfall. A good contract specifies both snow plowing and ice event response. Get quotes from at least three companies by early October, review their Google and Facebook reviews, and confirm they have proper insurance before signing.

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Q6

How do I protect evergreen hedges from ice storm damage in NB?

Protecting evergreen hedges from ice storm damage in New Brunswick starts with proper pruning and structural support installed before winter, because once ice accumulates on branches there's very little you can safely do. NB's Maritime location makes it particularly vulnerable to ice storms — freezing rain events that coat every surface with heavy ice, and even a centimetre of ice buildup can add hundreds of kilograms of weight to a mature hedge.

The best preventive measure is keeping hedges properly shaped and sized. Flat-topped hedges catch and hold more ice than rounded or pointed tops, so when you do your annual hedge trimming in late summer, shape the top into a gentle dome or slight peak that encourages ice to slide off. Keep hedges narrow at the top and wider at the base — this A-shape distributes weight more effectively and prevents the splaying that commonly destroys flat-sided hedges during ice events. If your hedge is already overgrown and top-heavy, plan a renovation pruning in stages over 2-3 years to bring it back to a manageable size.

For high-value or vulnerable hedges, physical support systems make a significant difference. Before winter arrives in late October or November, run a strong nylon rope or cable along the top of the hedge, secured to sturdy posts at each end. This prevents the hedge from being pushed apart by the weight of ice. For individual sections that have been damaged in past ice storms, install temporary 2x4 lumber braces on either side, creating a sandwich that holds the hedge upright. These braces should be padded where they contact branches to prevent bark damage.

Cedar hedges (arborvitae) are the most common and most vulnerable hedges in New Brunswick. Their multiple-leader structure and fan-shaped branching makes them prone to splitting under ice loads. If you have a long cedar hedge, consider installing permanent cables every 10-15 feet through the interior of the hedge to tie the structure together. This invisible support system can be the difference between a hedge that survives a major ice storm intact and one that splits apart permanently.

During an ice storm, do not attempt to remove ice from hedges. Frozen branches are brittle and break much more easily when disturbed. Let the ice melt naturally — in most cases, branches that bent under the ice will spring back to their original position once the weight is removed. If branches do break, wait until spring to do cleanup pruning, making clean cuts back to the nearest healthy lateral branch. After a severe ice event, it may take a full growing season or two for a damaged hedge to fill in completely.

Professional hedge repair after ice storm damage costs $200-600 depending on the hedge length and severity. For hedges that are critically important to your property's privacy or appearance, investing $300-500 in pre-winter support systems is far cheaper than replacement, which can run $50-100+ per linear foot for installed mature cedars in NB.

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Q7

How do I prevent salt damage to my lawn and gardens in New Brunswick?

Preventing salt damage to your lawn and gardens in New Brunswick requires a multi-pronged strategy of reducing salt use, creating physical barriers, and actively flushing salt from the soil in spring. Salt damage is one of the most widespread landscape problems in NB, where the combination of 250-300 cm of annual snowfall, heavy road salting by municipalities, and residential de-icer use creates a cumulative assault on plants and soil from November through April.

The most common damage occurs along roadsides and driveway edges where salt-laden snow is plowed or thrown by passing traffic. Sodium chloride (rock salt) damages plants in two ways: direct contact burns foliage and stems, and dissolved salt in meltwater infiltrates soil, disrupting root function and destroying soil structure. NB's already acidic soils (pH 4.5-6.0) are particularly vulnerable because they tend to have lower natural calcium and magnesium levels that would otherwise buffer against sodium damage.

Physical barriers are your first line of defense. Install burlap screens along the roadside face of hedges and foundation plantings to block salt spray from passing vehicles. Position the burlap on stakes 6-12 inches away from the foliage so it doesn't freeze to the plants. For garden beds adjacent to salted walkways and driveways, create a 6-inch raised lip or border using landscape edging that prevents salt-heavy meltwater from flowing into the bed. Directing downspouts and gutter runoff away from planting areas also reduces the volume of salty water reaching plant roots.

Reduce your own salt use dramatically. Most NB homeowners use far more de-icer than necessary. Rock salt works by lowering the freezing point of water, and one tablespoon per square foot is sufficient for most conditions — a thin, even scatter rather than the heavy piles many people apply. Better yet, switch to plant-friendlier alternatives like calcium magnesium acetate near garden areas, or use sand for traction instead of chemical melting. Apply de-icer before snowfall when possible, as it's more effective as a preventive than a reactive treatment, meaning you'll need less product overall.

Spring salt mitigation is critical. As soon as the snow melts and the ground thaws, flood salt-affected areas with clean water to leach sodium below the root zone. Apply 2 inches of water over several hours, let it drain, then repeat 2-3 times over a week or two. Follow this with an application of gypsum (calcium sulfate) at 20-40 lbs per 1,000 square feet — the calcium displaces sodium in the soil and the sulfate helps flush it downward. Overseed any dead grass areas in late August once the soil has been rehabilitated.

For chronic salt exposure zones, choose salt-tolerant plants. Rugosa roses, bayberry, daylilies, and many ornamental grasses tolerate moderate salt levels. Kentucky bluegrass is more salt-tolerant than fine fescues for lawn areas near salted surfaces.

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Q8

How should I mark my driveway edges before snow season in NB?

Mark your driveway edges in New Brunswick with 48-inch reflective fiberglass delineator stakes installed every 8-10 feet in October, before the ground freezes. This simple task takes less than an hour for most driveways and is the single most effective thing you can do to prevent plow damage to your lawn, garden beds, mailbox, and driveway borders throughout NB's long snow season.

Fiberglass delineator stakes are the industry standard for NB residential driveway marking. They're flexible enough to bend without breaking if a plow nudges them, reflective for visibility during early-morning and nighttime plowing, and durable enough to last multiple seasons. Look for stakes that are at least 48 inches tall — shorter stakes get buried after just a couple of heavy snowfalls, and NB averages 250-300 cm of snow annually. The reflective tape or coating should be on the upper 12-18 inches of the stake. You'll find them at NB hardware stores and building centres for $3-7 each, or in bulk packs of 20-50 for a lower per-stake cost.

Place stakes at critical points first, then fill in straight sections. Priority locations include: every corner where the driveway changes direction, both sides of the driveway entrance at the road, any spot where the driveway edge is hard to distinguish from adjacent lawn, around culvert pipes, and near flower beds, retaining walls, or other landscape features within 3 feet of the driveway edge. For straight sections, space stakes every 8-10 feet on both sides. On curves, tighten the spacing to every 5-6 feet so the plow operator can follow the arc accurately.

Installation technique matters for NB's freeze-thaw conditions. Push or pound each stake at least 12 inches into the ground — deeper if possible. Shallow stakes heave out of frozen ground during NB's freeze-thaw cycles and fall over, becoming useless when you need them most. If the ground is already starting to firm up when you

install them, use a metal rod or rebar to pre-punch a pilot hole. Don't wait until the ground is frozen — at that point you'll need to drill holes, which is far more time-consuming.

Beyond stakes, consider marking other landscape features. Place a tall stake next to your mailbox post, at the corners of any low retaining walls, and beside fire hydrants if one sits near your property. Mark the edges of any decorative stone borders or raised garden beds along the driveway. If you have in-ground lighting along the driveway, mark each fixture location — replacement costs for crushed landscape lights add up quickly.

Remove stakes in mid-April after the final plowing and store them in a dry location. Inspect them each fall for damaged reflective tape and replace worn stakes. The total investment for marking a typical NB residential driveway is $30-70 in stakes — a trivial cost compared to the $200-500 in lawn and garden repair that plow damage can cause each spring.

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Q9

Where should I place snow fencing on my New Brunswick property?

Snow fencing should be placed perpendicular to prevailing winter winds, positioned 30-50 feet upwind of the area you want to protect — typically your driveway, walkways, or vulnerable garden areas. In New Brunswick, prevailing winter winds generally come from the northwest, though coastal properties near the Bay of Fundy and Gulf of St. Lawrence may experience different dominant wind patterns that you should observe before installing fencing.

The key principle of snow fencing is that it doesn't block snow — it controls where snow accumulates. As wind hits the fence, it slows down and drops its snow load on the downwind (leeward) side, creating a drift in a predictable location rather than letting snow pile up wherever the wind happens to deposit it. A standard 4-foot

snow fence creates a drift zone extending roughly 10-15 times the fence height downwind, which is why placement distance matters. If you install the fence too close to your driveway, the drift will form right on top of it, defeating the purpose.

For driveway protection, install snow fencing 35-50 feet upwind of the driveway edge. This places the drift zone between the fence and the driveway, leaving the driveway itself in the wind-scoured clear zone beyond the main drift. If you don't have 50 feet of space to work with, you can reduce the fence height to 3 feet and place it proportionally closer, though the snow-trapping capacity will be reduced.

For garden protection, the calculus is different. You may actually want to trap snow over garden beds, since a consistent snow cover insulates perennial roots from NB's extreme cold (ground frost reaches 1.2-1.5 metres without snow cover). Place short snow fencing just upwind of perennial beds to encourage snow to accumulate over them, creating a natural insulation blanket. This technique is especially valuable in NB's Zone 3b-4a northern areas around Bathurst and Campbellton where winter temperatures regularly drop below -30°C.

Installation is straightforward. Drive metal T-posts every 8 feet along the fence line, pounding them 18-24 inches into the ground before it freezes in October. Attach standard orange or green plastic snow fencing to the posts using zip ties or wire. The fence should be about 6 inches off the ground at the bottom — this gap actually improves performance by accelerating wind underneath and increasing the snow-trapping effect on the lee side. Stretch the fencing taut between posts to prevent sagging under its own snow load.

Snow fencing materials cost $40-80 for a 50-foot roll and $5-8 per T-post. A typical NB driveway protection setup requires 50-100 feet of fencing and costs $80-200 in materials. The labour savings in reduced snow shoveling and plowing often pay for the fence within the first season. Remove the fencing in late March or early April once the heaviest snowfall risk has passed, and store it rolled up in a dry location for reuse — quality snow fencing lasts 5-10 seasons.

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Q10

How do I manage ice buildup on walkways without harming nearby plants?

Managing ice on walkways without harming nearby plants requires using plant-safe de-icers, applying the minimum effective amount, and supplementing with traction materials rather than relying solely on chemical melting. This is a particularly important challenge in New Brunswick, where frequent freeze-thaw cycles throughout winter create persistent ice problems on walkways, and the cumulative effect of months of de-icer applications can devastate adjacent plantings.

Your safest chemical option is calcium magnesium acetate (CMA), which breaks down into calcium and magnesium — both beneficial soil nutrients — rather than the harmful sodium found in rock salt. CMA is effective to about -5°C, which covers many NB winter days, though it won't handle the deepest cold snaps. For colder conditions, calcium chloride works to -30°C and is significantly less damaging to plants than sodium chloride. While calcium chloride does contain chloride ions that can harm plants in high concentrations, the calcium component actually helps NB's acidic soils. Use it sparingly and you'll get effective melting with minimal plant impact.

Application technique matters as much as product choice. Spread de-icer thinly and evenly — most people use 3-5 times more than necessary. A light scatter of granules is far more effective than thick piles, and less product means less runoff into garden beds. Apply de-icer before a freezing rain event when possible, as a preventive layer works more efficiently and requires less material than trying to melt established ice. Target your application to the walking surface only, keeping granules at least 6-8 inches from the edge where plantings begin.

Sand and fine gravel are the most plant-friendly approach because they provide traction without any chemical interaction with soil or roots. The downside is that they don't melt ice, so you'll still have an ice layer underneath. Many NB homeowners use a combination strategy: a very light application of calcium chloride or CMA to begin the melting process, followed by sand for immediate traction. This uses far less chemical product than relying on de-icer alone.

Physical ice prevention reduces your need for any products. Shovel walkways promptly after each snowfall before foot traffic compacts the snow into ice. In NB's climate, compacted snow on a walkway will turn to solid ice within hours and persist for weeks. Install proper drainage so meltwater doesn't pool and refreeze on walkways — this often means regrading a section of walkway or adding a French drain along the edge. Heated walkway mats ($100-300) are an option for high-traffic areas like front steps where ice is a persistent safety concern.

In spring, flush any walkway-adjacent garden beds with clean water to leach out accumulated chlorides before the growing season begins. Apply gypsum at 20-40 lbs per 1,000 square feet to help displace any sodium that has built up. These mitigation steps, combined with responsible winter product use, will keep both your walkways safe and your plants healthy through NB's long winter season.

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Q11

Should I water my evergreens during New Brunswick winters?

Yes, winter watering of evergreens is beneficial in New Brunswick, but only during mid-winter thaws when temperatures rise above 0°C for several consecutive days and the ground surface thaws enough to absorb water. Evergreen desiccation — also called winter burn — is one of the most common landscape problems in NB, caused by evergreen needles and leaves continuing to lose moisture through transpiration while frozen roots cannot replace that water from the soil.

The science is straightforward. Even in winter, evergreen foliage loses moisture through its needles and leaf pores, especially on sunny, windy days. NB's cold, dry winter winds accelerate this moisture loss significantly, and coastal areas near the Bay of Fundy and Gulf of St. Lawrence are particularly affected. Meanwhile, the root zone is frozen solid to depths of 1.2-1.5 metres, so the tree or shrub cannot pull water from the soil. The result is desiccated needles that turn brown, starting at the tips and working inward. This damage often doesn't show until spring, when homeowners notice entire sections of their evergreens have turned rusty brown.

The most critical watering happens in late fall, before the ground freezes. Give all evergreens a deep, thorough watering in late October and early November — soak the root zone with 1-2 inches of water over several hours. This ensures the roots and surrounding soil go into winter with maximum moisture reserves. This single late-fall watering is more important than any mid-winter watering you might do, and it's the step most NB homeowners skip.

During winter thaws — which NB typically gets several times between December and March — take advantage of above-freezing temperatures to water again. When daytime highs reach 3-5°C or above for at

least 2-3 consecutive days, the soil surface thaws enough to absorb water. Use a watering can or a hose (if yours hasn't been drained and stored) to apply several gallons around the base of each evergreen, focusing on the drip line where most feeder roots are located. Water during the warmest part of the day so it has time to soak in before nighttime temperatures drop again.

Not all evergreens are equally vulnerable to winter desiccation in NB. Broadleaf evergreens like rhododendrons, azaleas, boxwood, and holly are the most susceptible because their larger leaf surfaces lose moisture faster than narrow-needled conifers. Newly planted evergreens of any type are at higher risk because their root systems are less established. Arborvitae (cedar) hedges in exposed locations are another common casualty.

Anti-desiccant sprays like Wilt-Pruf are a valuable complement to winter watering. Apply them in late October on a dry day above 4°C. They create a waxy barrier on needles and leaves that reduces moisture loss by up to 80%. Combined with thorough fall watering and opportunistic thaw watering, anti-desiccants form a comprehensive defense against the winter burn that damages so many NB evergreens each year. A single can of anti-desiccant costs $15-30 and covers several large shrubs.

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Q12

How do I repair lawn damage caused by snow removal in NB spring?

Wait until mid-April or later to begin repairing snow removal damage to your New Brunswick lawn — the ground must be firm enough to walk on without sinking before any repair work will be effective. Working on soggy spring soil compacts it further, making recovery slower rather than faster. Once the ground is firm and you can see the full extent of damage from plowing, shoveling, and salt exposure, begin a systematic repair process.

Start with a thorough assessment of the damage types. Plow scrapes and gouges are the most common — these are areas where the plow blade dug into turf, tearing up grass and soil. Salt damage shows as brown, dead strips along driveway and walkway edges where de-icer runoff concentrated. Compaction damage appears as thin, struggling grass in areas where snow was piled all winter. Each type requires a slightly different repair approach, and most NB properties have all three after a typical 250-300 cm snow season.

For plow scrapes and gouges, the repair process is straightforward. Rake out loose debris and torn turf from the damaged area. If the soil has been scraped away, add topsoil to bring the area level with the surrounding lawn — you'll typically need 1-2 inches of soil for shallow scrapes and up to 4-6 inches for deep gouges. Firm the soil by tamping with your foot or a hand tamper, then overseed with a grass seed mix suited to NB's climate (Kentucky bluegrass and perennial ryegrass blends work well). Cover the seed lightly with a thin layer of topsoil or peat moss, and keep it consistently moist for 2-3 weeks.

For salt-damaged areas, soil treatment comes before reseeding. Flush the affected areas with generous amounts of clean water — apply 2 inches at a time, let it drain, and repeat 2-3 times over a week. This leaches sodium below the root zone. Follow with an application of gypsum (calcium sulfate) at 20-40 lbs per 1,000 square feet, which chemically displaces sodium from the soil. Wait 2-3 weeks after gypsum application before seeding, as the soil chemistry needs time to stabilize. NB's spring rains often help the flushing process along naturally.

For compaction under snow pile locations, core aeration is the best remedy. Rent a core aerator ($50-80 per day from NB equipment rental shops) and make two passes over the compacted areas in perpendicular directions. The plugs of soil pulled out create channels for air, water, and nutrients to reach the root zone. Follow aeration with a light topdressing of compost and overseeding.

Timing matters for seed success. Address structural repairs (filling gouges, flushing salt) as soon as the ground firms up in April, but save overseeding for the optimal mid-August to early September window when soil is warm and weed competition is low. Budget $100-300 for DIY repairs on a typical NB property, or $200-500 for professional spring lawn restoration.

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Q13

What is better for NB driveways — snow plowing or snow blowing?

For most New Brunswick residential driveways, a truck-mounted plow is the more practical and cost-effective choice, but snow blowing causes significantly less damage to driveway surfaces and adjacent landscaping. The best option depends on your driveway length, surface material, surrounding landscape investment, and how much snow NB's 250-300 cm annual average dumps on your property.

Plowing advantages are speed and cost efficiency. A plow truck can clear a standard two-car residential driveway in 5-10 minutes, which keeps per-visit costs low — typically $30-75 per push in NB. For long rural driveways common outside Fredericton, Moncton, and Saint John, plowing is really the only practical option, as snow blowing a 100-metre driveway would take an hour or more. Seasonal plow contracts in NB run $600-1,500, and the service is fast enough that operators can service your driveway in the early morning before your workday commute.

Plowing disadvantages are primarily about damage. Plow blades scrape driveway surfaces, accelerating wear on asphalt and concrete and pulling up gravel on gravel driveways. The blade inevitably catches the driveway edge occasionally, gouging into lawn areas. Snow is pushed to the sides of the driveway, where it piles onto garden beds, shrubs, and lawn edges — and that snow often contains road salt that damages plants. On driveways with pavers, natural stone, or heated surfaces, plowing can cause costly damage to the surface material.

Snow blowing excels at precision and gentle handling. A professional snow blower operator can clear to within an inch of the driveway edge without touching the adjacent lawn, and the snow is thrown to a specific location rather than bulldozed wherever the blade pushes it. This means you can direct snow away from valuable plantings and onto areas where the weight and salt won't cause problems. Snow blowing also doesn't scrape the driveway surface, making it far better for paver driveways, decorative concrete, and other premium surfaces.

Snow blowing takes longer and costs more per visit — typically 30-50% more than plowing for the same driveway because of the additional time involved. It's also less practical during NB's major snowfall events. When 30-40 cm falls overnight (not uncommon in NB), a plow handles the volume easily while a snow blower requires multiple passes and significantly more time.

The hybrid approach works best for many NB homeowners. Use a plow service for the driveway proper, and a personal or hired snow blower for walkways, patios, and areas adjacent to valuable landscaping. Some NB snow removal companies offer this combination service. If you're installing a new driveway, consider the snow removal method when choosing materials — a plow-friendly driveway should have flush edges, no raised borders, and a surface that can tolerate blade contact. If your driveway has pavers, flagstone, or expensive hardscaping, budget for snow blower service to protect your investment.

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Q14

How do I prevent roof snow avalanche damage to foundation shrubs in NB?

The most effective way to prevent roof snow avalanche damage to foundation shrubs in New Brunswick is to install snow guards or snow rails on the roof above vulnerable plantings, combined with physical plant protection structures at ground level. Roof avalanches are a serious and underestimated threat in NB, where 250-300 cm of annual snowfall means massive volumes of snow and ice can slide off a roof all at once, crushing or snapping even mature shrubs in an instant.

Understanding when avalanches happen helps you prepare. They're most common during and after mid-winter thaws when the snow layer nearest the roof surface melts slightly, losing its grip and sending the entire snowpack sliding. Metal roofs are particularly prone because they have a slippery surface, but shingled roofs also release snow avalanches after enough daytime solar warming. In NB, the south-facing and west-facing roof planes receive the most sun and produce the most frequent avalanches. North-facing slopes hold their snow longer but can release larger, heavier volumes all at once.

Snow guards are the primary engineering solution. These are metal devices mounted directly to the roof surface that break up the sliding snow mass into smaller, less damaging pieces that fall gradually rather than all at once. Pad-style snow guards (small individual clamps) cost $5-15 each and are installed in a staggered pattern across the roof — typically 3-5 rows for NB's heavy snow loads. Rail-style snow guards (continuous bars) cost more but are more effective for metal roofs and high-snowfall areas. Professional installation for a typical residential roof section runs $500-1,500 in NB, but that's far less than replacing mature foundation plantings.

At ground level, build protective structures over valuable shrubs. A-frame shelters made from 2x4 lumber and plywood, positioned over shrubs before winter, deflect falling snow and ice to the sides. Build them strong — a roof avalanche in NB can carry hundreds of kilograms of compacted snow and ice chunks. The shelter should extend at least 18 inches beyond the shrub on each side and be anchored so it doesn't blow over or collapse under the impact. Cover the plywood with a slick surface like sheet metal so snow slides off the shelter rather than accumulating on top.

Strategic plant selection prevents the problem entirely for new plantings. Avoid placing brittle or upright shrubs directly below roof edges without snow guards. If you're landscaping a new home in NB, plant low-growing groundcovers or hardy, flexible shrubs like creeping junipers in the roof avalanche zone — the first 3-4 feet from the foundation wall. Place taller, more vulnerable shrubs beyond the likely snow fall zone. For existing mature shrubs that can't be easily moved, the combination of roof-mounted snow guards and ground-level shelters provides the best protection. A landscape professional can assess your property's specific avalanche risk patterns and recommend the most cost-effective combination of solutions, typically for $100-200 as part of a fall winterization consultation.

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Q15

How deep should winter mulch be over perennial beds in New Brunswick?

Apply 4-6 inches of loose winter mulch over perennial beds in New Brunswick, with the deeper end of that range for exposed sites, marginally hardy plants, and NB's colder Zone 3b-4a northern areas around Bathurst and Campbellton. The purpose of winter mulch is not to keep the ground warm but to keep it consistently frozen, preventing the repeated freeze-thaw cycles that heave plant crowns out of the soil and expose

roots to lethal cold and desiccation.

Timing is as important as depth. Apply winter mulch after the ground has frozen to about 1-2 inches deep, which typically occurs in late October to early November in the Fredericton area, slightly later along the coast near Moncton and Saint John. If you mulch before the ground freezes, you insulate the soil warmth in, potentially delaying dormancy and creating a cozy habitat for mice and voles that will happily gnaw on your plant crowns all winter. Wait for that initial freeze, then pile on the mulch to lock the cold in and prevent thawing.

The best mulch materials for NB winter protection are loose and airy. Shredded leaves are the top choice — they're free, abundant during NB's fall cleanup, and decompose into the soil by spring to improve structure and fertility. Straw (not hay, which contains weed seeds) is another excellent option. Evergreen boughs from Christmas trees work well and are often available for free in January. Avoid using dense, heavy materials like fresh wood chips or whole leaves that mat together when wet — matted mulch traps excessive moisture against plant crowns, promoting rot and creating the ideal environment for snow mold, which is already a persistent problem in NB's humid Maritime winters.

Adjust depth based on plant type and location. Standard hardy perennials rated for your NB zone (Zone 4-5 for most of the province) need 4 inches — enough to prevent heaving without smothering the crown. Marginally hardy plants — anything rated Zone 5 that you're growing in NB's Zone 4 areas — benefit from 6 inches plus a loose cage of chicken wire filled with dry leaves for extra insulation. Newly planted perennials that haven't fully established their root systems need the deeper 6-inch application regardless of zone rating, as their shallow roots are more vulnerable to heaving.

Don't mulch right up against the stems and crowns of plants. Leave a 2-3 inch bare ring around woody-stemmed plants like lavender, Russian sage, and subshrubs, as moisture trapped against their stems promotes bark rot. For herbaceous perennials that die back to the ground, you can mulch directly over the cut stems since there's no bark to rot.

Remove winter mulch gradually in spring, starting in mid to late April. Pull back half the depth first, then remove the rest a week later as new growth appears. The cost of winter mulch is minimal if you shred your own leaves — essentially free — or $5-10 per bale for straw. For a typical 200-square-foot perennial bed, plan on 10-15 bags of shredded leaves or 3-4 bales of straw.

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