

Winter Weather Survey: Were You Prepared?

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Were you fully equipped to handle snow and ice management this past winter? Is weather affecting your overall purchasing or planting decisions? These are just some of the questions the *Turf* and *Plow* community decided to ask its audience of lawn care and landscaping firms, after record low temperatures, snow and ice, and rolling blackouts blanketed much of the U.S. last month. In fact, on February 18, 73% of the U.S. was covered in snow, according to The



Weather Channel.

Parts of the southern U.S. that rarely see such conditions over a sustained period were hardest hit. In [Texas](#), residents reported devastating effects on many [landscape trees](#) and ornamentals, that while zone-appropriate, could not handle the sustained cold and ice.

In other areas, those who perform seasonal [snow management](#), had a bit of a heyday. Discussions were up significantly in February compared to January; and even more dramatically when compared to 2020 figures. All this begged the question: will it affect how you prepare for next year?

Next Winter: Equipment Efficiency & Ice Control

While the majority of respondents* (62%) felt this past winter's weather was not unusual for their area, a significant number (38%) said it was. Yet most felt prepared, regardless, with only 10% answering they weren't equipped to handle the storms. Of that 10%, most were lacking a plow. One person answered, "I only have snowblowers. I wish I had a [plow](#) for my mini skid."

Interestingly, while 72% felt this past winter's weather would not affect future purchases of snow and ice equipment, 28% felt it would affect future purchases. From general ideas of simply "more" equipment, to issues of equipment efficiency and [ice control](#), here are responses as to what they will change.

- "Spend more."
- "Be more prepared."
- "We simply need more!"
- "Just have more equipment."
- "Different equipment purchases."
- "Will be adding additional equipment."
- "Need more efficient equipment."
- "Equipment that will handle this amount of snow more efficiently and is more reliable will be purchased."
- "Will be looking at more efficient equipment that moves heavier snowfalls easier."

- “Heavy equipment.”
- “Salting equipment.”
- “More skids of calcium chloride, more Toro paddles, etc.”
- “Plan to pre-purchase and stockpile ice control materials.”
- “Plan for more ice on reads, parking lots, and driveways.”
- “Keep in-stock repair parts.”
- “Need another truck with a plow”
- “New plow truck”
- “Probably get second truck plow.”
- “I’m going to buy a plow for my mini skid.”
- “Buy a plow.”
- “Intend to purchase a loader machine.”

One respondent elaborated on the need to control icing. “The last two weeks have been light when it comes to snow, but ice has been an issue. On top of that previously we received 28” of snow from mid January to the first week in February. I will be purchasing a front mount snow blower for my loader to move piles to accommodate more snow, and to move piles to limit refreeze across the parking lots when it starts to melt. I maintain a nursing home facility, so ice is definitely not a welcome sight.”

Of course, not everyone will be upping their snow and ice game. A smaller number of participants said they would not be investing as much next year, many citing a lack of equipment use this past winter. Responses included:

- “Won’t buy as much.”
- “Equipment is expensive and our stuff works just fine with maintenance.”
- “Didn’t use it, so didn’t wear it out. Don’t need to replace anything.”
- “No work, no wear. Stuff will last another year.”
- “Not enough snow events.”
- “Less equipment.”

Plant & Turf Implications



Texas roses covered in snow.

The long term recovery implications on prized Texan and other southern landscapes will play out in the next few weeks. While plants can be amazingly resilient, many losses will remain. As one respondent commented, “The snow and ice are now almost gone, but the lawns are swamps from the melt.”

Will devastated lawn care and landscaping clients want hardier replacements? Do landscapers plan to alter their plant and turf selections? 88% said this past winter's weather would not affect future plant decisions, but 12% said it would. Of those who are changing plant specifications, here's what they said they'll be doing:

- "Bulk purchases."
- "Purchase of climate appropriate species."
- "More hardy. Deer fencing and wrapping up evergreens."
- "More fungus resistant cultivars."
- "Will select more cold tolerant plant materials."
- "The drought-tolerant stuff is drowning."

Interestingly, more than one respondent mentioned winter salting's effect on plant selection. "Salt tolerant plant materials are becoming more and more necessary as [parking] lots require more and more salt these days. Customers expect clear, dry lots, which just isn't possible without oversalting in many scenarios," elaborated one respondent. Two others echoed the sentiment with: "Buy salt that won't hurt plants and grass;" and "More chloride resistant [plants]."

*Responses to the survey came from across the U.S. with the most input coming from the East Coast (38%) and the Midwest (34%). The South reported in with 11.5% of responses; Canada at 8%; the West at 5%; and the Southwest with 4%. While the majority of respondents (47%) received 0"- 5" of snow and ice in late February, 32% received 6"- 10"; 15% received 11"- 15"; and 6% received more than 16".

All photos graciously contributed by members of the Texas Gardening and Landscape Group on Facebook.