

# Home Horticulture - Ricky's Gardening Tips and Tricks - November 2020

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**Ricky's Gardening Tips and Tricks / Home Horticulture** is an online newsletter designed to provide citizens of Allen County and northeastern Indiana with up-to-date information about Horticulture and home issues, written in a lighthearted style! To subscribe, send an email to [kemeryr7@frontier.com](mailto:kemeryr7@frontier.com).

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## 2020 Garden Trends Some info Edited from bobvilla.com

Cleaning up a garden is never one of my favorite tasks. Since I grew mostly annuals, my clean-up chores are mainly relegated to pulling plants. Yes, I know I could wait until spring to pull some plants, but I do pile my sunflowers in one area so the birds have shelter and seed during the winter.

Record-keeping comes in handy, because it is important to assess what has worked (and what hasn't) each season. I have some salvias that are still in bloom—even after the frost and freezes. My pineapple sage was a real loser this year. Just as it was beginning to produce copious blooms, the freezes came in and I lost those flowers even after I tried to protect them with coverings.

The Mexican sunflowers were fantastic, but the regular sunflowers seemed to struggle a bit more compared to other years. They just looked—ratty.

It is clear that the pandemic is getting worse—instead of better— as the year progresses. It was also evident that many people stuck at home turned to gardening as a way to occupy themselves and produce some fresh food to have at hand to avoid the grocery stores and supplement their food budgets. It is said that once again Americans have taken up “Victory Gardening” much as they have in other crises that have occurred in our past. A tremendous surge in younger Generation Z and Millennials growing food in home gardens has occurred. Experts predict that at least 80 percent of last year's first-time gardeners will give it a go again in 2021.

Growing mostly annual flowers and a few veggies is easier for me – MR. Bad Knees. It is like looking at beautiful works of art created by nature each day- that change as the season progresses. Next year will bring a new painting – as long as I can still hobble around to plant and maintain it.

## Gardening Trends 2021

### **Demand for Products:**

In 2020, gardeners experienced shortages in seed supplies. Favorite seed varieties were sold out online, and store seed racks were riddled with empty slots. Now is the time to start planning. Seed companies could not keep up in 2020, and early indications show the same will be true in 2021.

### **Garden Centers and Greenhouses**

Garden centers had to make lightning-fast changes in their operations last spring. In 2021, look for the continued availability of conveniences like home delivery and curbside pickup. Other conveniences we'll see more of include wider shopping lanes, more ready-made gardens, mobile in-store checkout, and virtual

shopping. It will be interesting to see if some services such as curb services and delivery will continue even after most Americans are vaccinated.

## **Urban Gardening**

Some of the most cutting-edge garden innovation is coming from urban gardeners. Urban gardeners are building garden rooms for food production, relaxation, play areas for kids, and cooking areas - all in one area. Houseplants have become the background of choice for virtual meetings, and demand for them will continue to rise. Vertical gardening products will help gardeners use small spaces more efficiently. Growing fruit in small areas is also very popular with younger gardeners. One new plant introduction that will hit the market in 2021 is 'Midnight Cascade' - the first hanging basket blueberry.

Major concerns from urban gardeners include eliminating the use of toxic chemicals and making the space safe for family, pets, and pollinators. Native plants will continue to be very popular. People are shifting away from 'dead' landscapes filled with mulch and plants for decoration, to co-creating with nature. With the boom in gardening, younger gardeners are often surprised to encounter long-standing rules on things like temporary greenhouses and replacing lawns with native plants. Some states and communities are taking a second look at some of these policies in light of the major public interest in alternative gardening practices.

## **Smart Gardening**

The term smart gardening collects intelligent gardening tools that can be controlled via app or remote control and take on classic gardening such as watering plants or mowing the lawn. Thus, some irrigation devices are already able to monitor the weather and, depending on weather conditions, independently start the irrigation of the garden.

## **The Life of a Robot Lawnmower**

A lawnmower robot's electronic cries for help foiled a thief's plan to make off with the grass-cutting automation.

German police reported that a homeowner in the western town of Lippstadt was surprised with a smartphone message from the robot that it had flipped upside down.

When he went outside to the lawn to check on the device, he spotted a thief with the robot tucked under his arm.

Caught in the act, the thief dropped the robot and fled, according to police.

Officers searched the area but did not locate a suspect.

This incident occurred only one month after the mower was bullied by a neighborhood German Shepard who subjected the mower to uncalled for "tinkle abuse" after the German Shepard said to the mower "I vill use you like der fire hydrant!"

There was no word on whether the robot suffered damage in the incident. The robot is now undergoing electronic counseling to repair electronic emotional scars after the incidents. "I am not sure I can ever mow again" the mower tearfully remarked.

# Garden Blogs

It seems as if there are blogs for everything on social media nowadays. Former Batman TV viewers of the original series? Yep, probably a blog about that. How I clean my house and deal with other drama in a household? – tons of blogs about that subject. Celery juice fasting with gory details of indigestion and other too much information details? Yep... You name it -- someone wants to pour out their random thoughts on frequent social media posts called “blogs”.

The origins of the term “blog” began with the term “weblog” used by G. Raikundalia and M. Rees - two lecturers from Bond University on the Gold Coast in the mid-1990’s. The term was first used in a fabulously exciting (a 1 on a scale of ten) paper titled "Exploiting the World-Wide Web for Electronic Meeting Document Analysis and Management." Popular use of the term Weblog as we know it today is from Jorn Barger of the Weblog Robot Wisdom (robotwisdom.com) in December 1997. Barger coined the term weblog meaning logging the Web. In 1999 programmer Peter Merholz shortened the term weblog to blog.

Here are a few blog sites I found on a site that proclaimed the best blog sites for gardeners. I picked the ones most centered on urban and organic gardening. As with any Internet source, one needs to fact check any claims for products and garden practices that seem questionable. It is interesting that Alexa ranks these blogs – this is the Alexa that produces a disgruntled sound or remains silent when she doesn’t know an answer to our question or request.

**Gardening Know How's** experts want to help you become a better gardener, to have more fun gardening and to make sure all your gardening questions are answered. Frequency 30 posts / year Blog [blog.gardeningknowhow.com](http://blog.gardeningknowhow.com)  
Facebook fans 419.6K · Twitter followers 95.1K · Instagram Followers 107.1K · Social Engagement 7 · Domain Authority 73 · Alexa Rank 7.9K

**A Way to Garden** has been awarded as 'the best garden blog' by NY Times. The blog is a source of organic gardening inspiration and contains Horticultural how-to and 'woo-woo' from Margaret Roach, ex-editorial director of Martha Stewart. Frequency 1 post / week Blog [awaytogarden.com](http://awaytogarden.com)+ [Follow](#)  
Facebook fans 91.7K · Twitter followers 9.2K · Instagram Followers 9.2K · Social Engagement 785 ⓘ · Domain Authority 56 · Alexa Rank 594.7K ⓘ



**Espoma** is the leader in natural organic gardening products including plant foods, lawn foods, & potting mixes. Our mission is to offer the highest quality, most effective, natural and organic products for the lawn and garden industry. **Frequency** 1 post / week **Blog** [espoma.com/espoma-blog](http://espoma.com/espoma-blog)  
Facebook fans 263.4K · Twitter followers 2.3K · Instagram Followers 6.3K · Social Engagement 17 · Domain Authority 46 · Alexa Rank 358.

**Urban Organic Gardener** is an Urban-style organic gardening blog about growing your own food with limited space and creative resources. **Frequency** 1 post / day **Since** Mar 2009 **Blog** [urbanorganicgardener.com](http://urbanorganicgardener.com)  
Facebook fans 95.1K · Twitter followers 11.4K · Instagram Followers 187.2K · Social Engagement 2 · Domain Authority 51 · Alexa Rank 2.



David is an author and mad horticultural genius. **The Survival Gardener** blog is about Permaculture, Food Forests, Homesteading and Survival: The Gardening Blog of David The Good. **Frequency** 2 posts / month **Blog** [thesurvivalgardener.com](http://thesurvivalgardener.com)  
Social Engagement 6 · Domain Authority 40 · Alexa Rank 362.



**Garden Rant** is a team blog by Susan Harris, Elizabeth Licata, Evelyn Hadden, Allen Bush and Thomas Christopher. This blog has been named as Best Garden Blog, Most Innovative Garden Blog, and Best Written by the Mouse and Trowel award program. **Frequency** 1 post / day **Blog** [gardenrant.com](http://gardenrant.com)  
Facebook fans 2.7K · Twitter followers 9.7K · Social Engagement 95 · Domain Authority 56 · Alexa Rank 768.

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## Sweary Parrots Banished from Zoo from CNN

A group of naughty parrots in Lincolnshire, in eastern England, were removed from a zoo exhibit for using inappropriate language. The five African grey parrots were donated to Lincolnshire Wildlife Park by five different owners and quarantined together. Their “shared propensity to fly off the handle” immediately attracted notice, as did their tendency to greet visitors by “telling them to \*\*\* off” and spouting other insults. “I get called a fat \*\*\* every time I walk past,” remarked the zoo’s chief executive, Steve Nichols. Nichols said most visitors got a kick out of the parrots, “giving them as much back as what they were giving to them.” However, the cacophonous quintet was eventually split up and removed from public display out of concern for younger visitors.



## Raised Beds

I have long been a fan of growing vegetables and flowers in raised beds. Raised beds are easier to maintain than conventional beds established at ground level. One has more control over the soil that fills the bed. Taller beds generally have less weeds, and the weeds are easier to access and remove. Raised beds are easier to access for folks with physical limitations, and also allow earlier planting than conventional gardens.

Generally, the rules regarding raised beds haven't changed much.

The beds should be no wider than 4 feet, with at least 3-4 feet in between the beds.

Beds should be at least a foot in height, and the most recent trend is to build them much higher (up to 3-4 feet in height).

While treated lumber was used to construct raised beds in the early days, nowadays gardeners prefer raised beds made with more earth-friendly or alternative materials.

### Here are a few examples of innovative raised beds.

Galvanized sheets or roofing materials are being used more and more for raised beds. The advantages are that they will last a very long time and are an easy way to construct higher beds. The price of these products has gone down as more materials are being used for roofing. Some gardeners report that one can find deals that involve seconds or excess materials from hardware suppliers. Generally, a frame is constructed to support the sheets, but not always.



Many younger gardeners will scrounge materials for raised beds such as the plastic milk crates you see pictured. They can be painted to be more attractive, and some folks like the idea of sustainably repurposing existing materials to use in the garden. If you don't have any extra milk crates laying around, you can usually find them behind most big box stores sitting next to the recycling. This is a great project for small areas, especially if you don't have any green space to work with. The best part about using crates for your raised garden is that they can easily be moved if your plants need more shade or additional sunlight.

A new type of raised bed is called a snail garden, which looks suspiciously like an African keyhole garden. These type of raised bed designs make it a bit easier to assess all parts of the garden.



# Baobabs

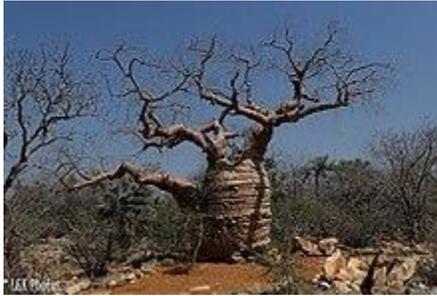
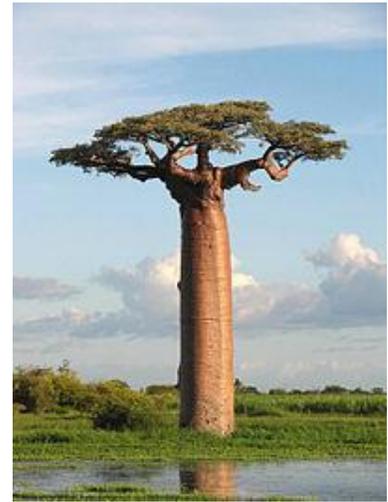
Baobabs are long-lived deciduous, small to large trees with broad trunks and compact crowns. Many folks say the trees look like they are growing upside down, because the top of the tree looks like roots.

The width of the trunk usually averages from 23 to 26 feet.

Baobabs are native to Madagascar, Africa, and Australia and have been introduced to Asia.

The genus name *Adansonia*, honors Michel Adanson a French naturalist and explorer.

Baobabs are among the most long-lived of vascular plants and have large flowers that are reproductive for a maximum of 15 hours. The flowers open around dusk; opening so quickly that movement can be detected by the naked eye and are faded by the next morning. The fruits are large, oval to round and berry-like and hold kidney-shaped seeds in a dry, pulpy matrix. Most *Adansonia* species are pollinated by bats.



Baobabs store up to 32,000 gallons of water in the trunk to endure harsh drought conditions. Across Africa, the oldest and largest baobabs began to die in the early 21st century, likely from a combination of drought and rising temperatures. Baobabs are important as nest sites for birds,

The white pith in the fruit of the Australian baobab tastes like [sherbet](#). It has an acidic, tart, citrus flavor. It is a good source of vitamin C, potassium, carbohydrates, and phosphorus.<sup>[29]</sup>

In Angola, the dry fruit of *Adansonia digitata* is usually boiled and the broth is used for juices or as the base for a type of [ice cream](#) known as *gelado de múcua*.

The fruit of *Adansonia digitata* is also crushed into a crumbly pulp to stir into porridge and drinks..

The seeds of some species are a source of vegetable oil. The dry pulp of *A. digitata* is also added to sugarcane to make beer.



## Robot Wolves are Scary!



(Reuters) - A Japanese town has deployed robot wolves in an effort to scare away bears that have become an increasingly dangerous nuisance in the countryside.

The town of Tanikawa on the northern island of Hokkaido purchased and installed a pair of the robots after bears were found roaming neighborhoods in September. City officials said there have been no bear encounters since.

Bear sightings have been at a five-year high, mostly in rural areas in western and northern Japan. There have been dozens of attacks so far in 2020, two of them fatal, prompting the government to convene an emergency meeting last month to address the threat they pose.

The so-called 'Monster Wolf' robot consists of a shaggy body on four legs, a blond mane and fierce, glowing-red eyes. When its motion detectors are activated, it moves its head, flashes light, and emits 60 different sounds ranging from wolfish howling to machinery noises. No one knew that wolves were good machine operators.... Need a backhoe driver? Call a Wolf....

Machinery maker Ohta Seiki has sold about 70 units of the robot since 2018.

The real Japanese wolf roamed the central and northern islands of the country before being hunted to extinction more than a century ago.

Tanikawa city officials said that bears become more active and dangerous as they search for food before going into hibernation in late November. A decrease of acorns and nuts in the wild this year may have driven the animals to venture closer to towns in search of sustenance.

## Growing Fruit Trees– General Considerations

I see many posts on social media from younger gardeners who want to grow some sort of fruit tree for their urban landscapes. Here are a few general tips:

The easiest common fruit trees to grow in descending order are: Pear, Apple, Peaches, Cherry and Plums (in my vested opinion based on hardiness, disease, and need for spraying). Other more exotic fruit trees such as hardy fig, apricots, pawpaw, and hardy kiwi are more difficult because of hardiness or pollination issues.

Some trees can take up to 5 years to begin to produce fruit. Most fruit trees need company – at least 2 other of the same trees nearby – to help with pollination. Fruit trees just do better with company – even if pollinators are not required.

Do not plant a fruit tree in a low area with poorer drainage. Most fruit trees prefer slopes (less than 30 degrees).

Many fruit trees need regular pruning for better fruit production, disease, and size management. Selecting dwarf varieties will reduce pruning needs.

Apples are probably the most vexing, because pruning apples involves what is called central leader or modified central leader pruning with scaffold branching. The picture to the right illustrates a tree with a clearly defined central leader – meaning that there is just one branch growing straight up at the top of the tree.



Usually at least three layers of horizontal branches are allowed to develop at roughly at one and a half foot intervals upwards on the tree. Often wood spacers or weights are added to the scaffold branches to train them to grow almost horizontal for better light and air penetration and heavier fruit production. Anything in between the scaffold branches is removed.

Notice the tree is not perfect, but it does follow the general guidelines. In semi-dwarf and standard apples, the top central leader must be removed periodically so the tree doesn't become too tall to pick fruit. Another central leader is then trained to become the new boss. Yearly maintenance pruning then consists of removing suckers growing from the rootstock, and water sprouts that try to develop on the scaffold branches that grow straight up, and any other branches to try to develop that cover or cross other branches that bear fruit. Over pruning (removing more than a third of the growth in any season) can result in an abundance of water sprouts and suckers. It is balancing act of keeping the interior of the tree open to sunlight and air for better fruit production and less disease.

One could of course do nothing and end up with a tree that is too tall to pick the few fruit that are produced because the tree is full of dense wood that blocks sunlight. Your apple would then become like the giant yew shrubs in the movie "The Shining" that attack anyone out on a winter's evening stroll.

Fruit trees are generally grafted, with a desirable scion, or top part, connected to a rootstock, or bottom part with roots. Where the top and bottom connect- called the graft union - needs to be above soil level. If the union is buried, then shoots will develop from the rootstock and potentially overwhelm the top.

Almost all fruit trees belong to the rose family. Rose family members generally require full sun and good drainage. Most are susceptible to fungal diseases and insects. Organic growers should have Serenade Garden fungicide on hand to spray in the spring to help prevent apple scab, and an organic insecticide.

You can amend the soil slightly in the area where you plant a fruit tree, but don't over do it. Compost works well as an amendment and fertilizer. It is better not to spoil your fruit tree as slightly stressed trees produce better fruit. Some old timey fruit growers would occasionally whack the tree with a stick to "toughen up" the trees to produce more fruit. I prefer to grow clover under fruit trees instead of mulching to draw pollinators, add some nitrogen to the soil, and reduce weed pressure.

# A Virtual Zoom Thanksgiving – Some family events never change

**The Participants:** **Maggie**, the super energetic tech-savvy Millennial organizer, **Patty** - Pie in the sky dreamy Gen-X with a creative bent. **Marge and Uncle Bob:** very pious, set in their ways, and judgmental. **Cactus** (not his real name) - Maggie's brother – the black sheep of the family. **Grandma:** about as tech savvy as a beached whale. **Prudence:** Perfect in every way. **Boomer** – baby boomer second cousin (from a previous marriage) who has past issues.

*The family has arranged to each cook a Thanksgiving meal with a pre-approved menu supplied by recipes from the participants. During the Zoom meeting participants will eat the meal and talk.*

**Maggie:** Thank you all for participating in the Smith family **Zoom Pandemic Thanksgiving Extravaganza!!** *Waits for applause-..... there is none.* Everyone have their mics muted? Grandma – please mute your microphone....

**Grandma:** Television blaring in the background- Steve Harvey is yelling and dancing lewdly on Family Feud- What? I can't hear anyone.....

**Maggie:** Grandma, see your computer screen? Press the little button on the left that says "Mute... Oh never mind- I will mute you myself....

**Prudence:** She should never be allowed within 10 feet of any computer.....

**Maggie:** Lets have Marge and Uncle Bob say grace before we eat, shall we? Some participants roll their eyes and shake their heads....

*20 minutes later.....* thanks to Marge, our wonderful grocery store clerk who double bags our pork chops, and thanks for all the incredible blessings to each and every one of us that are a part of this exalted life on earth... *pause...* Now Bob will recite the entire book of Psalms... I know you will all enjoy it so much.... some participants groan and roll their eyes and begin to nibble on the food....

*45 minutes later...*

**Maggie:** Ok uh.... thanks Uncle Bob and Marge.... *pours a large glass of wine ...* anyone have any family news they want to offer for everyone? Yes, Prudence...

*20 minutes later.....* **Prudence:** and our son Willet has just been accepted to Harvard law school! Isn't that just wonderful?? We were soooo fortunate to purchase twin black Mercedes convertibles this year... of course me being the most successful real estate broker in the history of Connecticut real estate, and the incredible money I make selling top notch exclusive homes .. it funded our new addition to the house with furniture upholstered with Corinthian leather ....

**Maggie:** interrupts .... ok... I think it's time to eat... Oh... I have so say.... Patty,, what an unusual recipe for Turkey and stuffing.... *pours another large glass of wine....*

**Patty:** Yes... I know... I am soo tired of the traditional turkey every single Thanksgiving. This is a praline, turmeric, peanut butter glazed turkey with a hummus and sardine stuffing... I just threw the recipe together while I was painting species of birds reading Tarot cards in my studio....

**Boomer:** *sitting at a desk with three computers and stock market quotes on a T.V in background...* I have never seen an orange turkey before... Wow! It tastes about as good as it looks...My entire house now smells like rotted fish.... Patty... I am still a little bit upset about how....during your visit three years ago.. your Corgi puppies urinated and defecated on my prize rose bushes- totally destroying them...

**Patty:** Takes a huge pull of Elderberry wine...I can't believe you would ditch my turkey and my beloved Corgis at Thanksgiving dinner! *Patty's screen goes blank...*

**Bob:** I have to get back to work, things to do....*screen goes blank...*

**Maggie:** Takes a big drink of another glass of wine...her speech is now slurred and sloshy... we seem to have lost Patty..... and booooring .Bob....Grandma!.....how do you like the damm turkey?? Unmutes grandma's microphone.....

**Grandma** is in her chair snoring. The Lawrence Welk show is blaring in the background. One of her 6 cats is nibbling on the meal on the table; its mouth and fur are covered in peanut butter and orange/yellow turmeric. It pushes off a gravy boat full of congealed gravy and sardines to waiting cats on the floor..... Grandma's flannel nightgown has sprung open revealing that she is wearing nothing under the nightgown...

**Marge...**Oh my heavenly Father--- Bob.. cover your eyes! ..... *Their screen goes blank...*

**Cactus:** so.... I can see that no one is really interested in how I am doing... I hope everyone enjoyed the Spam, Top Ramen, and Possum casserole I made. I do appreciate all the money everyone sent so I could pay the lawyer to try and keep Thelma Lou out of prison. I just don't understand why writing bad checks at the grocery store is such a big deal....

**Prudence:** .... perhaps if you had actually saved your money instead of losing it all buying lottery tickets and online gambling.....and .... there is no possum at the grocery. My butcher looked at me like I was crazy.

**Cactus:** Duh! You just drive around till you see one lying on the side of the road..... *screen goes blank...*

**Prudence:** Well, Maggie... I guess it just you and me and grandma. Did you all like the Maine lobster, Crab Legs, and Diver Scallop dish I created? I haven't told you all about the wonderful cruise we took to Belize in January .....

*Maggie's hand gropes wildly towards the computer keyboard ...spilling her glass of wine and uneaten Spam casserole .... she leaves the Zoom group....*

**Prudence:** Well. .... pause... Grandma, that turkey was an inedible travesty...and her Corgis .. as dysfunctional as The Queens Corgis. I remember how naughty they were when we visited the royal family at the annual All England Polo tournament. ,,,, It also reminds me of the Thanksgiving we had for my son's graduation at our exclusive beach property in Florida .. we had 5 turkeys that day, all prepared in different ways.....

.....Grandma continues to snore.....

## Yield Right-of-Way

*Note: I wrote this story around in the early 2000's, so if you are old enough, you remember trips to Blockbuster and other video stores.*

Just recently, I was dropping off a video at a rental store. To get to the rental store, one has to negotiate a complex set of roads winding this way and that. Several “feeder” roads enter the main drive. Every feeder road had a Yield sign clearly displayed for all drivers to see. As I followed the main drive to the video store, I noticed a car approaching from a “feeder” road.



The driver nonchalantly continued past the yield sign without even a glimpse of slowing down to look for others. As I continued, she suddenly slammed on her brakes - for the first time realizing that I was there. I continued on to the store to drop off the video. The driver pulled past me and stopped. I looked to see an angry woman in her mid-thirties or early forties with her hands up in the air as if to say- What are you doing – I nearly ran into you!!

After our communion, the woman slowly drove away. I noticed as I followed that she was a lane-changer –you know the driver who can never stay in the same lane of traffic – constantly changing lanes and cutting other drivers off to find the quickest way to her destination.

I think folks have forgotten the Yield sign and what it means. The Yield sign means look out for others, to allow right-of way for another driver who is on a road more important than yours. The driver may be on a road where the speed limit is higher than yours. Or the approach from a feeder road may be dangerous because of a lack of vision for approaching cars.

No matter the reason, we all need to learn to Yield – to other drivers, and to other people as we cross paths in the road of life.

**Yield** means we hold the welfare of other people as important as our own welfare. In politics, when a speaker is finished making the point, they yield to another speaker in a polite way so they can speak their point of view.

In today's world it seems as if politicians and people alike have forgotten how to yield in a civil way to hear others point of view.

Yield - Right-of-Way means that it is not always about you – it is also a regard and a concern for everyone else.

I think the Yield sign may be one of the most important signs on the road - don't you?

## Ice Melts

Ice melt products work because they attract moisture to form liquid brine, which generates heat and melts ice. De-icers also help to break the bond between the ice and the pavement.

The five main deicer products contain either sodium chloride (table salt), calcium chloride, , potassium chloride, urea, or calcium magnesium acetate.

**Rock salt** is the least expensive material. It is effective to approximately 12 degrees F. Rock salt used in excess can damage soils, plants, animal paws, concrete, and wood or composites.

**Calcium chloride** is a common ice-melting product. It will melt ice to about -25 F. However, it can form slippery, slimy surfaces on concrete and other hard surfaces. Plants are not likely to be damaged unless excessive amounts are used. Sometimes, adding materials such as cat litter or sawdust to calcium chloride can help reduce the slipperiness.

**Potassium chloride** can also cause serious plant injury when it is splashed on foliage. Potassium chloride can damage roots of plants.

**Magnesium Chloride** is rapidly growing in popularity. This product is similar to calcium chloride but has a lower melting point of -13 degrees F. It is typically more expensive than calcium chloride, but is also less corrosive, and safer on concrete and plants.

**Urea** is a fertilizer that is sometimes a component of deicers. Though it is only about 10% as corrosive as sodium chloride, it can contaminate ground and surface water with nitrates. Urea is effective to about -21 F. Urea blends are touted to be irritating to pets.

**Calcium magnesium acetate** is a newer product - made from dolomitic limestone and acetic acid (the principal compound of vinegar). This material works differently than the other materials in that it does not form a brine-like salt but rather helps prevent snow particles from sticking to each other. It has little effect on plant growth or concrete surfaces. Its performance decreases below 20 degrees F.

There are two kinds of glycols which are commonly used in ice melts – ethylene glycol, and propylene glycol.

Ethylene glycol is incredibly effective and is often used as an airplane deicer. It can reduce the freezing point of water to an incredibly low -58° F. However, ethylene glycol also is poisonous to humans and animals, and thus is relegated mostly to use on the exterior of airplanes.

Propylene glycol (PG) is nontoxic to plants, pets and animals. In fact, it's often used in food flavorings and cosmetic products. In recent years, it has replaced the use of ethylene glycol because it can lower the freezing point of water to almost -75° F! It's available in some pet-safe ice melt blends. As PG is a liquid, it's generally mixed with some form of traction-enhancing, porous granular material. So, when you purchase a granular ice melt that uses it, what you'll see is the traction-enhancer rather than the colorless liquid PG.

While all types of ice melt should be handled with caution, here's a short list of dangers to people or pets associated with different varieties of ice melt and how to avoid them.

**Sodium Chloride:** Too much salt can dry out paw pads on cats and dogs. Also, while pure salt is okay to eat, too much is not OK, and road-grade rock salt may contain other ingredients and other deicers. Don't eat it!

**Calcium Chloride:** Handle with caution. May cause stomach irritation if ingested, skin and eye irritation and burning if gotten in the eyes, or respiratory issues if inhaled.

**Potassium Chloride:** Breathing in the dust while spreading can cause cough/sore throat and getting the dust in your eyes can cause redness and eye pain. Ingesting it can cause nausea, vomiting, weakness, and convulsions.

**Magnesium Chloride:** Avoid breathing the dust as it can cause significant irritation, and do not get the dust in your eyes. May cause light irritation to skin. Ingestion causes nausea, abdominal discomfort, and vomiting.

**Acetates:** Avoid getting these in your eyes or inhaling them as they can cause lung and eye irritation. Wear gloves while spreading and wash thoroughly afterwards. Be sure to rinse off animals' paws after walking through acetates.

Resist the temptation to over - apply any deicer. Keep in mind that many deicers can damage concrete surfaces as well as the plants and grass growing along the walks and driveways. Any damage to plants will not usually show up until spring or summer.

Although they are generally less effective, other products can also be used to treat icy sidewalks and driveways. Sometimes adding sand or other alternatives can improve traction and help the deicers perform more effectively.

Natural alternatives like sand, sawdust, wood shavings, and kitty litter are mainly effective for their gritty, anti-slip qualities and pose less harm to the environment and pets. These types of products provide better traction to walk on the ice, but do not actually melt ice. They are often mixed with ice melt products as a way to use less chemicals.

Falls on icy sidewalks result in significant injury to citizens- especially to seniors. Pick the product that works for you- to avoid damage to people- pets, and plants.

## Hoggles' Demented Cat Logic



**Turmeric turkey and sardine gravy sound great to me....**

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