

Hardscaping & Paver Department

Snow Melts for Your Home (By Tina Kearney)

There are a variety of ice melt products on the market and choosing the right one for your product can get confusing.

Rock Salt

Rock salt is best limited to asphalt. It is popular because it is highly effective and is fairly inexpensive. It works by essentially turning your fresh water snow and ice to salt water which has a lower freezing point. However, it can have a corrosive effect on concrete and often leaves behind a white haze which will need to be cleaned up later. It also has a very fast endothermic effect. This means it draws heats up very quickly and can cause pitting on concrete and spalling on natural stone due to the sudden temperature change. Lastly, salt poses the most danger to nearby plants and soils as it increases the salinity in the soils and can cause physical damage/browning of evergreen foliage.

Blended Ice Melts

A blended ice melt, like our Fast Melt, is a better choice for concrete, pavers and sealed natural stone. Blended Ice melts use potassium, magnesium or calcium chlorides (Fast Melt uses a blend of potassium chloride). Their thermal reaction is less extreme than plain rock salt and is highly effective in lower temperatures, down to 5° F. Blended Ice melts are more expensive than rock salt but because they are more efficient, you should use less. They're readily available and better for plants and hardscape materials.

Pet Safe Ice Melts

Pet Safe Ice Melts

Many chemical ice melt products can be toxic if ingested by pets (and Kids!) and both ice melts and rock salt can cause severe irritation to paws. We recommend and carry, Safe Paw which is a pet and earth friendly ice melt. It is highly recommended by animal professionals. This product is non-corrosive and very safe for all surfaces including natural stone. Products that are pet-safe also tend to be better for plants and landscapes. It is a little pricey but worth every penny if it means you are protecting your furry family members while your outdoor investment is getting the right treatment.

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Snow Melts for Your Home (Continued)

Application Tips

Patience is the key to proper application. The biggest mistake people make that results in ice melt related damage, is applying their chosen ice melt product too thickly. It is important to scatter the pellets or flakes so that they fall like a light snow flurry (falling at approximately 1/8" to 1/4" apart). Waiting about 20 minutes, and then go back out and reapply on any areas where ice is still sitting. Do not use products on un-shoveled and snowy areas. Taking up as much snow and ice as possible first, keeps down the amount of product you will need to use.

It is also a good idea to pre-treat. Just like the brining you see on the area roadways, pre-treating your key areas, will help you stay ahead of the game.

Also pay attention to temperature. Rock salt is only good to use to around 15° F. Calcium chloride works at the coldest temperatures, down to 5° F and Potassium and magnesium chlorides are effective in the temperatures in between. If it drops below 5°, most ice melts just won't work. In those situations, it would be best to spread some sand or other grit for traction until the temperatures warm up.

