



**BEST COAST FENCING**

# Winter Is Coming!

Is your home ready?

We don't know about you, but we find lots of reasons to love the winter season. Whether we're spending a day snowboarding on Mt. Hood or just relaxing at home around a warm fireplace with an inviting view of the Winter Wonderland cascading around our property, we find there's something magical about a good snow day.

Unfortunately, whether you're a fan of the snow or not, winter can sometimes spell trouble for your home's exterior. In the right (or wrong?) conditions, the excessive moisture and added weight can cause serious damage to your outdoor structures.

Now don't be alarmed - not all winter days are a threat to your property. However, it's good practice to be familiar with the right time to be concerned and how to prevent long-term damage with some basic maintenance.

The following guide is designed to help clarify the dangers of winter weather on your outdoor structures, at what point it becomes a cause for concern, and steps you should (and should **not!**) take to help protect your investment.

# Seasonal Care

Winter '23



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## The Problem With Winter Weather

Here in the PNW, our weather can be a bit unpredictable; one minute the sun is shining, and the next we're plunged into the worst rainstorm of the season. The same can be true in the winter, and sometimes we're surprised to wake up to deep snow cover and dangerous, icy roads.

When it comes to your exterior upgrades, winter moisture will be your first enemy; all unprotected wood structures, including as fences, decks, patio furniture, garden boxes, or sheds, can be subject to water damage over time and will undoubtedly acquire that unattractive, dull gray discoloration we know you've seen somewhere before in just a few seasons of it. Unfortunately, not even your metal structures are always in the clear; excessive moisture exposure can lead to corrosion due to the salt content of snow and ice melt, ruining both the integrity and aesthetic. Further, in periods of heavy snowfall or ice coverage, the additional added weight and brittleness can cause bowing, bending, cracking, splintering, or other expensive damage to your outdoor structures.

That said, you may or may not need to be concerned about imminent structural damage to your outdoor wood-working projects if you just leave them alone. So, how can you tell when it's time to take action?

## When To Be Concerned

Don't worry - one rainy day isn't going to cause excessive water damage, and you surely won't find your fence has collapsed after one snowfall (presuming there's a decent level of quality to it). In most cases, even an unprotected structure will manage to last a harsh winter season. Shoveling snow can be hard, intensive labor, and there's not always a reason to subject yourself to it. For example, decks are designed to handle tremendous amounts of weight, so if your snow fall is under 3ft, you likely don't have to worry about it collapsing under the pressure. Your fence, however, depending on its structural build and support, may not fare nearly as well.

But maybe long-term damage isn't the only reason to be concerned. In some cases, there's a safety component (we don't want the little ones or fur-babies hurting themselves while they enjoy their winter oasis, nor do you want to be blocked in in the event of an emergency!), but particularly in the case of an unprotected structure, it can be helpful to take precautionary



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steps anyway. That way, when the weather starts to warm, your structures are in their best possible shape for you to take future protective measures.

## Protecting Your Investment

Preventative measures taken during the warmer months and throughout the winter season will help maintain your structures' longevity and keep them safe against the harsher elements. This may include things like:

- **Staining, painting, or otherwise waterproofing your wood structures.** Wood is subject to rot from too much moisture buildup, and the lumber used to build your fence, deck, or other outdoor structure is no different. Even pressure-treated lumber, while water-resistant, is not 100% waterproof. Adding a quality stain or paint job can help seal the wood and protect it from water damage.
- **Opting for rot-resistant post wrapping.** To make your structure solid and secure, it'll need posts buried in the ground. Post rot is a behind-the-scenes threat that works below the ground, utilizing moisture and your below-the-ground ecosystem to eat away at your support posts and ultimately cause your structure's demise. Opting for a preventative measure, such as encasing your post in solid concrete and/or applying a rot-resistant post wrap, can help save you from this silent threat.
- **Pressure washing, adding a salt neutralizer, or applying a protective coating to your metal structures.** With snow and ice melt comes another problem: corrosion. When the warmer weather arrives, be sure to pressure wash areas exposed to ice melt and/or deicer, including the lower building support, to help prevent metal corrosion. Further, although removing excess moisture and deicer from your metal structures can help, but adding a protective coating is a more low-maintenance solution to protecting your metal's longevity.
- **Covering your structures.** In some cases, it may be an option to go the route of simply covering your structure before the rainy season arrives.
- **Prune trees and large foliage.** When the temperatures drop, surrounding trees can become brittle, and when their branches or trunks snap or collapse, any structure underneath them could be at risk to costly damage. For this reason, you may need to consider pruning your trees or other large foliage if there are any areas of concern. (Note that this is best done in the summer or fall seasons when conditions are safer.)
- **Remove excess moisture and/or weight.** If winter is already here and you haven't

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## Summary

### Why are snow and ice a problem?

- Water damage/wood rot
- Gray discoloration of lumber
- Bowing, cracking, bending, and other structural damage
- Metal corrosion

### When does it become a concern?

- If your structures are not properly weather proofed
- If snow fall is excessive enough to add a weight load your structure cannot handle (typically 3ft or more for decks; can vary for fences depending on the type and build quality)

### What should I do (and not do) to protect my investment?

- Stain, paint, or otherwise waterproof your wood structures
- Opt for rot-resistant post wrapping
- Pressure wash your metal structures when it warms up; consider adding a salt neutralizer or adding a protective coating
- Cover your structures
- Prune trees
- Remove excess moisture/weight
- Use the right shovel
- Don't salt your wood deck or patio
- Don't wait until it's too late!

gotten around to staining or otherwise waterproofing your structures, and if covering them isn't a viable option, then you may consider spending the extra effort to remove the excess winter moisture at regular intervals. Brushing, shoveling, or otherwise removing snow and ice buildup from your outdoor structures will help keep them looking and functioning at their best for as long as possible. And in the case of excessive snow or ice buildup where added weight becomes a concern, be sure to take the time for this step - whether your structure is waterproofed or not.

## Things You Shouldn't Do

- **Don't salt your wood deck or patio.** Although it's sometimes necessary to salt your driveway or walkway in order to leave your home after a snowy or icy night, do not fall to the temptation to salt your wood deck or patio. The salt and resulting ice melt can strip your stain and/or discolor your finishes, which can be costly and frustrating to fix down the road.
- **Don't use a metal shovel.** It may seem arbitrary, but metal shovels can have serious consequences on your wooden structures! Scraping, chipping, and other damage can often result from the abrasiveness of the metal against your delicate wood surfaces, so opt for plastic instead.
- **Don't wait until it's too late.** Your home is an investment, and it's often less stressful and more cost effective to take preventative measures rather than deal with an avoidable problem. Contact your local contractor today to discuss any concerns you may have and possible options for extending the life of your outdoor structures.

Best Coast Fencing is a small, family owned and operated company based out of Oregon City, OR serving the broader Portland Metro area. If you'd like to hear more about how we can help add value to or protect your home or business, please visit our website at [www.bestcoastfencing.com](http://www.bestcoastfencing.com). Better yet, send us a message - we'd love to hear from you!