

April 2009

Hard times? They do seem awfully hard just at the moment. It's difficult for those who make their living with their hands to understand why the whole shootin' match depends on those soft handed dudes who make their livings by moving numbers around. Notice how everyone denigrates government until the roof caves in and the basement is full of water?

But hold on now, it isn't that bad. We begin to see a few signs that perhaps we are at the bottom. Home sales are up. The markets responded nicely to the latest plan for "toxic assets". We in Oregon know that you have to grab sunshine wherever you can get it. At least we don't have a dust bowl in the banana belt.

And at Robinson Nursery, our rays of sunshine are our customers. We sincerely appreciate your business. But more than that, we appreciate knowing you, your families and employees. So many of you have called this year, sometimes with good news, often with bad. But we will get through this together, and come out the other end stronger. As Scarlet O'Hara said, "Tomorrow is another day". Well, Duh!



## Winter Woes

We thought we were almost through with winter, and now we hear of flooding in Fargo, and blizzards in Denver. It seems like we have had record cold, wind, drought, snow and rain in most areas of the country. Snow and ice can be hard on trees.

The most common damage to trees is the loss of limbs due to the weight of snow and ice, as shown below. Though this limb



attachment looks fairly healthy, it failed. Most lost limbs are due to limb attachments with included bark. On a small tree, it's not such a serious matter,



but when a large tree fails, it is possible that tons of weight can come down on a house, a car, or a kid building a snowman. We as nurserymen have an obligation to do what we can to avoid included bark crotches. As the tree develops, we need to keep an eye for very narrow crotches and remove them. Done in a timely manner, it won't effect development of the tree. Of course, when it comes to pruning, knowing what to do and doing it early makes all the difference.

There are some trees, such as this Willow,



which aren't really prime candidates for shade trees. This tree had no decay or structural problems. It just had too brushy a canopy, and the weight of snow and ice forced a failure. It seems like some of the "soft"

hardwoods have problems.

Frost cracking is another tree problem in winter. This Frans Fontaine Hornbeam split and separated the bark most of the way around the tree. Covering the trunk before winter may save the tree.

Part of the problem here is that in Oregon, our fall is so mild that some trees don't go into full dormancy. Then when the hard weather



hits, whammo kaboom! It's not uncommon to see Pears with lots of leaves still on in January. Salem had a street planting of Pear that was completely destroyed by ice.

Anyway, Spring is almost here. Soon we will be complaining about the heat.