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A Science Service Feature

? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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TREES IN ICE STORMS

In the northern United States and in Canada no winter passes in which ice storms do not cause much shattering of trees, and in some cases the damage is comparable in magnitude to that done by a great windstorm or a forest fire. The situation in general is beyond remedy, but shade trees in towns and the trees about people's homes can be protected to some extent by jarring the limbs with poles from time to time during the fall of rain that forms the ice deposit and thus shaking the latter off before it grows heavy enough to cause breakage. Also in selecting trees for planting it is worth while to remember that some species are much more susceptible to damage by ice loads than others. Dr. E.P. Felt, director of the Bartlett Tree Research Laboratories, says:

"Those with a large proportion of small branches are more likely to suffer, other conditions being equal, than the more sparsely limbed, stouter-branched trees. Much also depends on the toughness of the wood. The birches, for example, have a large proportion of slender branches and are speedily loaded during ice storms, but fortunately the trunk is limber, and while the trees may be borne to the earth they are rarely broken."

Dr. Felt has published a list of common tree species in the order of their ability to withstand the effects of these storms. The ginkgo heads the list, being followed by pin oak and sugar maple, while the poplar, on account of its brittle wood, stands at the bottom.

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