

Living Snow Fences

Every winter season, drivers do battle with mother nature's innocent, little white nuisance. Snow. Slippery roads can cause minor and major accidents all over the State of NY. People can damage their vehicles, become seriously injured, or sometimes even die. Snow plows cannot keep up, fuel costs get expensive, and salt supplies run low. Open fields can cause blowing and drifting snow, which can continuously cover the cleanest roads, and cause whiteout conditions. Traveling in these conditions is hazardous to everyone who travels, and yet there is nothing we can do. Or is there?

Living snow fences can decrease the amount of snow on the roads. Living snow fences are barriers made from natural, living materials such as trees, shrubs, or Streamco willows. They offer an environmentally safe and cost effective way of improving snow management. A living snow fence is usually placed in an open field, along a stretch of road. The blowing snow then is directed into the living snow fence, and deposited on the other side. This eliminates or greatly reduces snowdrifts, and the amount of snow that is blown across the roadways. Because the snow fence is "living", the vegetation also provides habitat for wildlife, reduces soil erosion, improves water quality, and reduces possible flooding issues.

The cost of installing a living snow fence is relatively inexpensive when compared to installing other types of snow fences, the costs of plowing, including fuel and salt. Depending on the kind of vegetation installed, the amount of land loss is minimal, and landowner's may be able to receive assistance in installing a living snow fence. They are designed to keep motorists safe, save time, and save money. If there are any interested landowners in Tompkins County who might be interested in learning more information about living snow fences, please contact the Tompkins County Soil and Water Conservation District at 257-2340, or Natural Resource Conservation Service at 257-2737.

