

EVERGREEN MAINTENANCE

Evergreens are a wonderful addition to any garden. They add dramatic colour and texture to landscapes, providing interest in the dead of winter. Evergreens are some of the most versatile plants making them suitable for almost every landscape situation.

PRUNING

Evergreens can and should be pruned to retain or improve their shape and appearance. This is usually done in late June or early July after the main flush of growth. **It is advised never to prune after July 30th.** Pruning helps facilitate health growth and a well-shaped form. Although not all evergreens require the same pruning techniques or pruning at all.

Spreading Evergreens

With pruning shears, cut back the main stem of each branch that requires pruning. This will effectively reduce the overall length of the branch or stem and ultimately increase the fullness of the plant, enhancing its shape. It may be necessary to do this to only a few of the branches of the plant ie: those that are creeping over walks, or too close to other plants and buildings

Pyramidal Evergreens

Using a pair of hedge shears, cut back about 3 to 6 inches of growth to original shape. **DO NOT** cut back into wood beyond the needles. They will not branch and produce new growth from mature (old) wood. Other formal, topiary or asymmetrical shaped evergreens can be pruned in the same manner. If topping is necessary to prevent further upward growth, be sure to select the main leader. This minimizes its height, although a new leader will appear down the road. Selection of appropriate eventual heights of pyramidal evergreens should be examined before attempting the task of topping.

Mounding Evergreens (Mugo Pine)

To maintain certain sizing, to shape and encourage a full bushy effect, use a pair of hand pruners (secateurs) or hedge shears and cut the 'candles' (top narrow growth of emerging needles) in half. This should be done when needles are out of their casings and unfurled (May). The growth should be still soft.

FEEDING:

Fertilize yearly with high nitrogen – low phosphorous and potassium fertilizer to promote excellent growth and colour. We recommend Plant Products Ever-Acid or Evergreen 30-10-10 fertilizer. Remember: too much can burn the roots or needles, causing damage to your plant. Other feeding methods are using fertilizer stakes (formulated for evergreens), throughout the growing season. These Evergreen Tree Stakes can last up to 60 days. Begin to pound these stakes into well-watered soil around the drip line of the evergreen in early spring. Then repeat again in early summer. It is also advised to fertilize again in late fall once cooler temperatures have stabilized. Using Blood and Bone Meal is an All Natural alternative that has both high nitrogen and phosphorous combinations.

Cultivating and adding triple mix, manure, or compost to the soil each spring and/or fall, with your existing soil helps to suspend the fertilizer's nutrients as well as providing good aeration to the roots.

WATERING

Evergreens are quite durable plants and do well when exposed to natural consistent rainfall. However, supplementary watering is important when it comes to drought like conditions; ie: where evergreens are planted under an eaves trough or when dealing with tender cultivars. The main point to remember when watering evergreens is that they are deep rooted, therefore sufficient water should be applied to provide penetration to a depth of 12 - 16". To achieve this let the hose run at the drip line of the plant on a low trickle for a couple of hours. It is best to water thoroughly and deeply once a week instead of every 1 – 2 days for a short period of time. Fall watering is vital for over wintering. Be sure to water deeply again in late October to early November; weather permitting. When evergreens prepare for dormancy in late fall, they desiccate water from their foliage. Added moisture at the root level compensates for that water loss.

WINTERIZING

Depending on the age of the plant, it's size and it's hardiness, some evergreens require winter protection. There are different methods that can be used to protect your evergreens. Wrapping with burlap or a breathable material prevents drying. The wind will sweep over the material and not let moisture to be drawn directly out of the needles or leaves. Erect a screen around the perimeter of the plant by staking posts outside the drip line, then stapling burlap or a tarp material around it allows for the same amount of protection. This is primarily done on irregular or smaller shaped evergreens. Another winterizing practice is twinning conical shaped conifers. Attach twine to the base of the tree and progressively wrap it around the tree from the bottom to the top, gathering its branches in to tightly secure them to the main stem. This allows snow to fall off the tree and gather in the branches adding weight that could snap the branches off. These practices are time specific. Wrapping too early in the fall can cause damage if the weather is too warm and wrapping too late won't be helpful either. Keep watch of weather patterns and employ these methods when a good succession of frosts have taken place.

Once evergreens are well established and begin reaching maturity, these overwintering practices do not have to be strictly employed, for an evergreen is meant to be seen and enjoyed year round in your garden.