

Celebrating 22 Years!

ask the landscape professional

Linda K. Lillie of Sprigs & Twigs

Welcome to my weekly series!

Feel free to send me questions you'd like to have me answer and I will do my best to address the ones of most general interest.

EMAIL OR MAIL YOUR QUESTIONS TO:
info@sprigsandtwigs.net or
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QUESTION THIS WEEK:

Dear Linda, I have a 50+ yr old, 45-ft tall Pine Tree that has become very sickly looking in the past year. The lower branches on the north side of the tree seem to be in worse shape. Can you please tell me what ails the tree and if it can be saved? I have attached pictures of the Pine Tree for you to look at. Thank you! Kimberly

Linda's Answer:

Dear Kimberly,

The photo you sent me is of a beautiful Norway Spruce Tree. You have lichen growing on your tree. It is completely harmless and there is no need to be concerned. Lichen is a unique organism because it's not just a fungus, but an alga as well that lives with the fungus symbiotically (when two different kinds of living things live together and depend on each other). The fungus part of lichen collects moisture which the alga needs and the alga creates food made from the energy of the sun for the fungus. Lichen is found in many places like on trees and rocks; in gardens they look wonderful on landscape rocks. Lichens are completely harmless to trees and although they are attached to the tree bark by "rhizines" which are hair-like roots, they do not penetrate deeply enough to cause any concerns. Lichen grows slowly and likes undisturbed surfaces, so you won't see it on species of trees that shed their bark frequently.

Different forms of lichen have been all over the world for centuries, including the Arctic and Antarctica. There are more than 15,000 types of lichen and estimates run as high as 6% of the earth surface is covered by lichen. Lichen will only grow in places where the atmosphere is clean, so it's a good sign and you can be happy that you have them growing on your property!



Norway Spruce Tree

Linda K. Lillie has been President of Sprigs & Twigs, Inc. for the last 22 years. She is a graduate of Connecticut College in Botany, an accredited NOFA Organic Land Care Professional, a Connecticut Master Gardener and a national award winning landscape designer for her design and installation projects.

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