

ASK THE LANDSCAPE PROFESSIONAL

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 Linda Lillie, Sprigs & Twigs Inc, PO Box 245, Gales Ferry, CT 0633



Question this Week:

Hi Linda – We purchased this spruce shrub 2 months ago and planted it in a sunny garden (5-6 hours sun) at the front of our home. I fed and watered it for the first few weeks and it seemed to be thriving. Two weeks ago, we noticed it starting to brown. We've had tunnels from chipmunks or voles, in this area and wondered if this could be causing the problem. Do you have any advice on how to save this shrub? Thank you...Carol



Linda's Answer:

Dear Carol,

If you can easily pull up the shrub from the ground and there are no roots at the base of the plant....then you have a vole problem.

It looks like when the plant was watered the water was poured directly on the center of the plant. Always water the ground around the plant, not the plant itself.

A few weeks of watering for a shrub is not enough. A shrub takes 1-5 years to get established depending on the size of the shrub at the time of planting. Established means the plant has enough

new roots growing out from the original root ball to support the entire plant with nutrients and water. At two months old, the spruce's roots will still be contained within the pot size it was planted in with very little new root growth.

My best guess is your plant has died from lack of watering.

When planting new plants, do not water every day. Water deeply every other day or every two-three days depending on how much natural rain falls and the time of the year. Allowing the plants roots to dry out between watering will help encourage new and longer root growth. Allow the water to puddle around the plant approximately three times and allow it to sink into the soil to make sure the roots are getting watered deeply. Always water in the morning to allow the plants to dry off before nightfall.

An important point when planting new plants. If the root ball of the plant is thick and tangled with roots when removed from the nursery pot, the roots need to be gently loosened with your fingers or sliced with a sharp knife to encourage new root growth. If this step is not done, the roots will continue to grow in a circular pattern as if it was still in the pot and will not grow out into the new soil.