

**Welcome to  
my weekly  
series!**



Linda K. Lillie of Sprigs & Twigs

# ask the landscape professional

**SEND ME YOUR QUESTIONS ...** I will do my best to address the ones of most general interest. **Email or mail your questions to: [info@sprigsandtwigs.net](mailto:info@sprigsandtwigs.net) or Linda Lillie, Sprigs & Twigs Inc, PO Box 245, Gales Ferry, CT 06335**

## **Linda's Question of this Week:**

**I'm starting to see some brown color on my evergreens. Are they beginning to die?**

## **Linda's Answer:**

What you are starting to notice is called "desiccation" and is commonly referred to as winter damage. The browning will actually get worse as spring approaches. Basically the plant is "drying out" as more water leaves the plant through the foliage than it takes in through its roots. The problem can start in the fall if it is particularly dry and a plant's root system is lacking sufficient water. All year, plants normally lose water through its leaves through a process called "transpiration". In winter, if the ground is frozen deeper than the plants root system, the plant's water supply is cut off. As winds increase, the transpiration loss of the plant increases and damage to the plant can occur. Brown, dead-looking foliage on the side of the plant facing the wind is where the damage appears. Especially susceptible are evergreens like Pine, Holly, Spruce, Fir, Juniper and Arborvitae. This is also referred to as "winter burn" or "winter scorch".



Proper watering is very important in the fall to help prevent this type of damage now. If there hasn't been sufficient rain in the fall, give the plant, especially evergreens, a deep soaking before the ground freezes. Even now, watering during warm days in February and March when the ground is not frozen will be very helpful. Also, it's not too late to erect windbreaks made out of burlap (or similar material- but not plastic) around your evergreens if they are small enough. If you find you have to do this each year, you should get in touch with me and I can suggest a heartier choice for that spot in your garden.

Other than watering, don't take any other action now and certainly do not prune too soon. Wait until you see new growth in the spring before you prune out the dead by cutting back to 1/4" of a live bud. If the branch is dead in the spring, it's dead. It's not going to come back and if you don't remove it, insects will be on their way.

*Sprigs & Twigs is a highly regarded, professional, full service, national award winning Landscape Design, Installation, Maintenance, Tree Care and Lawn Care Company. We are completely organic. Visit our website or call us for more information.*

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Linda K. Lillie is the President of Sprigs & Twigs, Inc, the premier landscape tree care & lawn care company in SE Connecticut for the last 17 years. She is a graduate of Connecticut College in Botany, a Connecticut Master Gardener and a national award winning landscape designer for her design and installation work.

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