

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 or Linda Lillie, Sprigs & Twigs Inc, PO Box 245, Gales Ferry, CT 06335**

Linda's Question of this Week:

Two weeks ago, you answered a question about browning evergreens and winter damage. I see that happening almost every year at my house and it's pretty stressful. Is there anything I can do?

Linda's Answer:

Yes, there is. Let me expand a bit on my answer of two weeks ago when I wrote about a process called "desiccation" which is the plant "drying out" as more water leaves the plant through the foliage than it takes in through its roots.

Depending on the severity of the winter damage, there may not be anything you need to do, other than water when the ground thaws. If there is needle loss in the case of evergreens, new buds may form in the spring and eventually fill-in the damaged branch areas. So wait and see what happens in the spring. After the new growth emerges, you should be able to see the completely dead branches from the ones that are alive. On the live ones, cut the dead section back to 1/4" above the live bud.

A really important thing to prevent further winter damage is to make sure that the plant gets plenty of water in the summer. You don't want to head into the next winter with a plant with a water deficit. Previously damaged plants should get 1" of water a week, paying special attention to them if there is a summer dry spell. This watering will re-invigorate the plant and help it withstand the cold, dry winter. Also, when winter comes, if the days are above freezing, get the hose out and give those plants a good, deep watering. Also, it's always good to put 3-4" of thick mulch rings around the base of trees and shrubs which helps the soil retain the moisture and keeps the ground from freezing as often. In certain areas, a necessary and very helpful thing to do is to erect a burlap shield or windbreak. In past winters, we have actually built burlap wraps around certain species of Arborvitae which helped to protect them from winter burn. Sometimes the right thing to do is to relocate the tree or shrub to a more protected area out of the wind or replace it with a more hearty variety.

Yearly winter damage to trees and shrubs tends to affect the vigor of the plant, but with a few prudent actions earlier in the year, most issues can be avoided. If you need any help in protecting and preparing your shrubs and trees for the winter or relocating or choosing heartier specimens in the spring, give Sprigs & Twigs a call, we'd be happy to help.

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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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