

Winter Tree Care in Evergreen

Snow covers the ground the trees are dormant, resting and waiting for spring to grow again, now is the time to think about how to prepare our trees and especially newly transplanted trees, for optimum growth and health next year.

Water During the Winter

Tree roots can dry out and die in the winter if the ground is not covered with snow. Two things are important: One is to water when it's a warm sunny day. Start early in the morning so the water can soak into tree roots and not freeze. Shallow watering is one of the common problems in tree growth. The feeder roots on the tree that soak up water are fibrous, small, and are generally 18 inches from the surface. Water dripping in at a slow rate for 3 or more hours will allow the roots to soak in the moisture; like a gentle summer rain. If roots are subjected to a large amount of water all at once they can't breathe and they lose their oxygen capacity. Be sure to water the trees according to their size for at least 3 hours per tree. Long, slow, deep watering guarantees that the fibrous roots below the ground below the ground will get saturated.

Why Mulch?

Make sure the trees have enough mulch around the base to hold in the moisture. Old growth trees have natural mulch composed of pine cones, needles twigs and moss. Newly planted trees need an addition of mulch such as wood chips to keep the moisture in the ground. Six inches of mulch will keep the roots from drying out quickly. Nurseries and tree services often have mulch for sale or free, from chipped up trees. Spread the mulch 6

inches from the trunk to prevent rot from decomposing mulch, and out to the drip line (the farthest place that the branches can drip water).

Pruning

Winter pruning gets the tree ready for spring growth. Often trees have branches broken off in high winds and heavy snows. When cutting a branch, be sure to allow the branch collar to remain. A branch collar is the area between the trunk and the branch. To keep that area intact do not cut closer than one fourth to one half inch from the tree trunk. Cutting closer to the trunk will inhibit healing and leave the tree open to insect infestation.

What about insects?

According to Colorado State University entomologist, David Letherman, beetle infestation is getting worse. About twenty years ago, many pieces of beautiful blue stained furniture were made from nature's pruning in the Evergreen area. If you notice any browning in trees not cut down in the summer, be sure to remove them. Even though the Mountain Pine Beetle has flown and is now nesting in your other trees. The distressed trees make a handy habitat for the Ips Beetle. To save the trees; you don't want for firewood, spray in the early spring.

Wrapping it up.

Deciduous trees, such as aspen and cottonwood, will sometimes split on the trunk from the frost. Wrapping them will do 2 things; prevent the frost split and keep the elk from sharpening their antlers on them. . Problems occur if the wrap is left on through the summer. A fungus may develop under the wrap injuring the trunk of the tree. If you wrap in the winter, unwrap in the early summer.

Dr. Joan Spalding is a member of the Commercial Arborists Association and an educational consultant.