



TREE WINTERIZING

• **Water** - slowly, thoroughly and infrequently (if there is deep snow when you read this, move on to the next topic). Newly planted trees and shrubs should be watered once a week during the first fall. Maple, Birch and Alder are particularly susceptible to drought injury in late fall and winter. Always send your garden into winter with moist soil. The last watering is often around Thanksgiving. Even dormant trees need water, so... if we have no substantial rain or snow, water at least once a month, even through the winter.

• **Fall Feeding** - Biosol organic fertilizer is the best “Winterizing” fertilizer we’ve ever used. The organic materials in Biosol feed microbes in the soil that in turn produce nutrients for the plants (while improving the soils). Dr. Earth bioactive fertilizers introduce microbes to our poor soils. We use Dr. Earth to feed and inoculate the soils at planting time and to feed during the growing season.

• **Winter-Kill** - Stems that are not “hardened” or ripened in the fall (as a result of late season chemical fertilizing, excessive fall watering or funky weather), they won’t survive winter. The ice between the cells (which helps protect the cells) is exposed to the dry air and sun. This ice sublimates (ice to vapor - and v.v.) allowing the little remaining super-cooled moisture inside the cells to be drawn out which then causes irreversible drought and cell death.

Our high elevation winter sun will also damage thin-barked deciduous trees when dramatic temperature swings occur. The trunk of a tree absorbs the sun’s heat and thaws-out during the day; when the sun sets, temperatures drop rapidly, water in the cells turns to ice and the cells rupture and.... tissues die.

Damage can also be the result of reflected heat, artificial warmth (from drier vents, etc...) or simply that plants are not suited to this climate (“annual” trees from a drugstore “Annual Tree Sale” for example). Use plants hardy to USDA z. 3-4 or Sunset z. 44-45

• **Protecting Trunks** - It is important to protect the trunks of young trees by wrapping them with “Trunk Protectors” or by painting the trunk with white latex paint. The trunk protectors also offer a barrier against winter rabbit and rodent damage. They should be removed during the growing season.

• **Winter Protection** - Those who reason that they can protect non-hardy plants from the cold of winter with a blanket of mulch or a wrapping of cloth are mistaken. Within very few hours, the ambient cold will penetrate any covering. Wrapping broad-leaved evergreens like Rhododendron or Holly can keep the sun off and protects them from drying.

• **Mulch** - Mulch is essential, even for the hardiest plants. Lay 2-3” of loose organic compost out past the drip-line of every tree. Winter mulch protects the soil, roots and other soil inhabitants (microbes) from sun, wind, and desiccation and from temperature swings (freezing-thawing), not from cold. Use **Gromulch, Soil Building Compost, Bark Mulch** or wood chips. Good rules of thumb: “You should not be able to see any bare dirt closer than 3 feet from your tree or shrub” - or - “Dig the hole two to three times as wide as the rootball and always mulch two to three times as wide as the hole.” - or - “No bare soil!” -vn

• **Antitranspirant** - Cloud-Cover and Wilt-Pruf are anti-transpirant sprays that can help protect new plants, broad-leaved evergreens and susceptible conifers from freeze-drying, especially for their first winter. We treat the entire nursery to prevent losses.

• **Tree Staking** - Before the soil freezes, place one sturdy 2” x 10’ treated lodgepole stake just outside the root-ball on the west-southwest side of your trees (2 cut-down stakes are used for summer staking in lowland, high-wind areas only, not for snow). Use double strands of heavy-duty (1” x 8mil) tree tape to loosely tie the trunk of the tree to the stake in 2 or 3 places. Use loose figure-eights and trim excess.

• **Tree Tying** - In fall, after the leaves have fallen from your more brittle or vulnerable trees and shrubs, tie them up for the winter. Starting at the bottom, wrap the tree tightly to itself, with branches as close as possible, using heavy-duty (1” x 8mil) tree tape (green, clear or brown). Then wrap down, binding the wrapped tree to the sturdy stake. In extreme snow-load areas an extra stake may be tied up the center of the tree (i.e. conifers) to splint the leaders for the first few winters until they grow above the settling snow.

• **Pruning** - Pruning is best done in spring and summer over the first few years to promote strong branch shoulders create stout branches, and to build sturdier trees that will be better suited to heavy snow-loads without tying. **Don’t prune in fall.**

• **Untying Trees & Shrubs** - Late spring snows (wet) often damage trees that have been untied early. May is a common time for local gardeners to begin removing the tree tape. Be careful not to knock off any new buds when unwrapping in spring.

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