

WINTER DAMAGE ON EVERGREENS

The long warm beautiful fall of 2014 ended abruptly on Nov.10 when the temperature fell 40 degrees and then dropped to 14 degrees below zero a couple days later. Plants were not hardened off and many suffered freeze damage. Some conifers had needle and bud damage with some needles turning red or brown or even whitish. Even some junipers had dieback. Even some cacti froze: just lop off the dead pads or barrels.

Many broadleaf evergreens like Euonymus shrubs, Boxwoods and even Mahonias now have brown leaves that will fall off. Hopefully many of them will releaf in spring. Don't be in a hurry to cut out dead. Wait at least until early summer to prune. To determine if a branch is dead, use your fingernail to scratch off some bark: if it is green underneath, it is alive; if brown (and wrinkled), it is dead. If in doubt, wait.

Water during dry periods and give stressed shrubs and trees a drench with liquid seaweed and yucca (Sledgehammer-by Fox Farm) and/or some minerals and a light dose of an organic fertilizer (like Harlequin's Fertility Mix with mycorrhizae) or compost tea.