

## Winter Burnout? Plants Experience It Too!

If you look around your neighborhood, you may notice evergreens browning and yellowing. This is winter burn, and it can occur on any evergreen such as boxwood, holly, rhododendrons, and all other conifers. It results when the plant runs out of moisture due to drought or frozen soil. Over the winter months, evergreens are still creating food through photosynthesis and releasing water through transpiration. They will lose water more quickly when it is windy or in an area where it is experiencing salt spray from roadsides. The South side of plants can also dry out more quickly due to sun and exposure. If the water lost cannot be replenished the result is dehydration, foliar damage, and sometimes death.

It is always a good idea to water evergreens in the fall to avoid this problem, especially new plantings.

If we have a dry spring, water struggling plants and monitor them for any new growth development. Some plants may have new growth on the tips that will hide any browning out. If the tips have died back, there may be new growth on the middle of the stem. In this case, prune off any deadwood. Depending on the species, new growth may not emerge until late May or early June, so be very patient and let the plant recover before making any major pruning cuts.



Left Picture: Winter burn on dwarf Alberta spruce

Bottom Picture: Winter burn on rhododendron

