

Dressing for Winter

HOW TO KEEP YOUR EVERGREEN FASHIONABLE AND WARM IN ONTARIO

With winter approaching we have several options; my favorite is to head south to a warm climate for my sunshine fix, however if you stay you need to dress for what will inevitably come. Unfortunately our plants do not have these options and are hopefully rooted in place at home and thus some might need winter protection.



With bright winter suns and frozen soil, evergreens are particularly prone to winter desiccation and where possible need a little protection until they mature and can 'stand on their own roots' so to speak. Some evergreens, those that have a special dislike for our Ontario winters can always benefit from some protection such as the Irish Yew pictured here. In the last column I mentioned the importance of supercharging the plants prior to ground freeze and the use of mulch around new plantings. Both these will help ensure evergreen survival but you can take one more precaution; dress your plants.



The idea behind wrapping or dressing evergreens is quite simple, by enclosing a plant in a cloth tent or cover, less foliage is exposed to drying winter winds reducing stress and ensuring happy healthy plants greet you in the spring.

Now style and trendiness are as important to your evergreens as it should be to you. Only the best evergreens are wrapped in burlap and twine while the uninformed are wrapped in plastic, cloaked in plywood huts and dread, even hidden in garbage bags; don't embarrass your evergreens and yourself by dressing them inappropriately.

Plastic does not breathe and the wooden huts retain heat on warm, sunny winter days. The plants, thinking they are in a sauna will sweat, and nasty things begin to happen to decaying leaves and stems. Disrobed in the spring, plants wrapped in plastic and fenced in wood will surely be embarrassed

with their mush foliage and twiggy growth that they may contemplate heading south with me next year.

Dressing your evergreens is quite simple, you can use a frame around the plant and attach the burlap to it or if the plants are larger/taller you can follow the process I used on an Irish Yew staying at my house for the winter.

The uniform of choice is elegance in its simplicity, burlap in a roll, and a length of twine. Wait until the weather cools considerably and we have had a couple of hard frosts. The frosts will halt plant growth and whatever you're wrapping will then appreciate the coat that much more.

Starting at the top of the plant using a spiral pattern, wrap the fabric around the plant snugging it as you go so that the burlap has a little tension applied to it by the outward pressure of the branches. Continue to the bottom of the plant and fasten in place with a small stick or nail pushed through the two layers of burlap.



Starting at the bottom of the plant tie a piece of twine snugly forming a loop around the lower branches. Holding the string to the side of the plant about 12" above the first loop with your left hand (this process is opposite for left handed people), pass the ball of twine around the back of the plant with your right hand passing under your left hand at the front, snug in place and repeat the process until you reach the top of the plant. Once at the top tie another knot to secure the twine in place.



Once completed you can line up the twine on the front of the plant so that neighbours can see that you are an obviously well informed, trend setting individual knowing what only the trendiest evergreens wear.

Michael Pascoe NDP.,ODH.,CLT.,MSc

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