

DIG THIS By Peg Tillery (for 12-04-02) , ©2005

I know I've written about Asplundh's Arborists (and WSU Master Gardeners) Jim Trainer and Janet Brown quite a bit but they've asked me to send out a plea to my readers. We have had drought conditions for the last four years and forest (and garden) conifers especially are starting to show signs of stress. Janet wants readers to call her at 360-475-7067 or toll free at 1-800-225-5227 Extension 83-7067 to report sightings of stressed and dying trees for a survey she's compiling.

The last four years during the months of June through September we've had very few inches of rain. Our winters haven't had an abundance of rain either. Even though our Pacific Northwest has many rainy days, evergreen trees go dormant in the winter just like our deciduous trees. When trees are dormant their roots don't take up as much water as they do in the spring and summer during their growth periods.

Janet says, "When water is lacking, nutrients are not made available to the tree." So the tree not only suffers from lack of water, it also suffers from lack of nutrients too. Trees should be watered during the months of May through October. If Mother Nature doesn't provide the water we humans need to instead.

Jim and Janet want me to remind readers that trees roots go out two to three times past the drip line. That means if a tree has a canopy with a diameter of thirty feet then the roots would go out sixty to ninety feet in all directions. Trees need normal, slow, deep watering they remind us.

Jim recommends inserting a one to two foot long pvc pipe with drainage holes at a slant into the ground at several points around the drip line of a tree. Fill the tube with water. The pipe will drip slowly for three to four days watering deeply. Janet recommends circling the tree with a soaker hose and letting it run in the early morning for several hours.

Some gardeners place corrugated, perforated drain tile (pipe) at least three inches in diameter around the drip line of a tree in the bottom of the hole before planting the tree. The tube is filled with water before placing the root ball and backfilling the hole.

Janet says, "Death may look sudden, but it's actually cumulative. A tree can take stress over several years before it gives up and succumbs."

Trees show stress and signs of death from the top down. Kitsap residents are noticing firs, hemlocks and pines especially. The tops of the trees are totally brown or even bare. Dying deciduous trees are hard to identify during the winter but you'll notice them in the spring and summer because they will remain bare or have huge areas of bare branches. Alders and big leaf maples have been showing these signs Janet says.

What if your trees are showing these signs? Contact Janet for advice. She will send you information on how to safely remove the tree or mitigate any hazard that could be caused as it dies.

In the meantime you can help reintroduce trees to an area on the Northwest side of the Warren Avenue Bridge in Bremerton. December 14 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. students from Silverwood School members of Kitsap Trees and community volunteers will be planting the trees 2002 trees in the area lining Juniper Street in celebration of the year 2002. Everyone is invited. Dress for the weather and bring your shovels and help replant this area. The

Poulsbo Tree Board and Kitsap Trees will have information on how to select and plant the right tree for your own gardens and neighborhoods.

On December 5 Stillwaters Environmental Education Center (26059 Barber Cut Off Road) is assisting Spectrum Community School by hosting an evening with ecological educator Pablo Gallardo from Mexico. For five dollars you can hear him speak about his perspective on environmental concerns and his love for the Earth. Register at 360-297-2876 or email SwatersEEC@cs.com.

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