

DIG THIS By Peg Tillery (for 10-18-06) Flagging Cedars, Tree Planting Too © 2006

The cedars are doing their annual flagging. Flagging is when portions of the cedar branches dry to a quite pretty rust, sienna, copper color and fall off. It can seem quite alarming at times. We're so familiar with the deciduous trees and their annual fall foliage painting the trees and ground in gorgeous autumnal colors. But we seem to forget about conifers (particularly cedar, fir and pine), rhodies and other evergreen shrubs losing up to one-third of their growth every year.

It's a good idea to know the varieties of conifers you have. Not all conifers are evergreen. *Larix occidentalis* (western larch, sometimes called tamarack) turns yellow and gold losing its foliage entirely each year. Dawn redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*) is deciduous turning beautiful reddish brown before losing its leaves. *Cryptomeria japonica* turns colors ranging from dusky green (spring and summer) to vibrant magenta, rusty red and other crimson/brown shades through the fall and winter. There are several varieties of *Cryptomeria* to choose from, some with nearly variegated foliage turning multiple colors during the seasons, yet never losing foliage other than normal flagging.

Some of our rhodies are showing drought stress. Rhodie leaves curl in response to drought and cold. We've received a bit of rain, but none measurable in the last two months. You will want to thoroughly water all your plants in the next week or so to help them get ready for winter. Some garden areas will need to be watered in stages; notice how rapidly the water soaks in and then check to see if the water is soaking down into the soil to the plants' roots. It will depend on individual gardens and their soil conditions. Some parts of one garden could have many areas each needing different amounts of water. For instance you may need to water for about 20 minutes in the morning and 20 minutes in the evening to allow water permeation, rather than a continuous 40 minutes with water running off the soil.

This time of the year is perfect to plant woody trees and shrubs. It's an especially good time to check out all the fall foliage at your favorite nursery and then take a few beauties home to plant and enjoy for years to come. It's also a good time to move shrubs around (provided they're not too established and too large). If you decide to move a plant, dig the new hole first, next dig up the plant and move it, being sure to water it in well and remember to water once a week until the rains begin in earnest.

Any time you plant a tree or shrub you'll want to remove it from the pot, burlap or container. Check for winding, twisted or bent roots. Unwind, unbend, untwist or trim damaged roots before planting. Make sure the planting hole is several times larger than the circumference of the root mass. There's a motto to follow, "dig a \$100 hole for a \$10 plant."

Our WSU Extension Kitsap Master Gardener satellite clinics are closed for the season. You can still access horticulture and gardening information through the Kitsap County WSU Extension Office located at 345 6th Street Suite 550 in Bremerton. The hotline at 360-337-7158 is also open all year long.