

DIG THIS by Peg Tillery (for 10-03-07) Evergreens and Apple Maggots in Fall © 2007

Don't become alarmed when your evergreen plants start shedding foliage this fall. Many of us look forward to nature's colorfully painted deciduous landscapes in the fall. But when we happen to notice the evergreen cedars turning shades of rust and brown, we think the trees are dying. Not to worry, all evergreens shed their foliage particularly at this time of year, just like our deciduous trees.

You will probably notice it most on rhodies and cedar trees. It seems as if the plants are dying because their foliage is turning color and the plant is shedding what seems like huge quantities of leaves. Evergreen trees and shrubs replace up to one-third of their foliage each year. As the old foliage dies and falls off, new foliage is forming. In the spring your plants will be back to their normal evergreen colors.

There are also varieties of rhodies that appear completely evergreen most of the year but are really deciduous. These plants usually have smaller leaves than evergreen rhodies. If you saved your plant tags you'll be able to check the name and look up the variety in resource books or on websites to discover if your rhodie is an evergreen variety or deciduous. Oftentimes you can bring a stem with leaves still attached to the WSU Kitsap Extension Office, 345 6<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 550 in Bremerton and we can help you decide if your plant is dying or if it's a deciduous variety.

Several varieties of conifers are deciduous, losing all their leaves in the fall. Look for the plant labels: Bald Cypress, Metasequoia, Dawn Redwood, Larch, Pseudolarix (may also just say Larix) and sometimes trees in the Cupressus family. If you're lucky enough to still have a plant tag you can check the tag to see if your plant is in any of these groups. Or, when purchasing a conifer, ask the nursery staff if it's a deciduous conifer or an evergreen conifer.

Several varieties of rhodies, azaleas and conifers have foliage that changes color with the seasons. Some evergreen conifers turn shades of gold, paler green, yellow and sometimes crimson or magenta in the fall and winter. 'PJM' rhododendron and 'Stuart Stonianum' azaleas are examples of evergreen shrubs whose foliage changes with the seasons. During fall these plants will be painted in splashes of orange, bronze and dark mahogany. It's quite striking and adds interest through the colder seasons. In the spring the foliage will return to what we think of as "normal" shades of green.

On a totally different subject, maggot damage is occurring now on apples, in stone fruits, Asian pears and regular pears. The signs appear first as small dots or dimples on the outside of the fruit and then when you cut open or bite into the fruit you'll discover a discoloration caused by bacteria forming when the tiny maggot wends its way out of the fruit.

Sometimes people don't notice the damage until their fruit starts rotting from the inside out. The maggots crawl out of the fruit, fall to the ground, burrow into the soil a few inches and pupate to become an egg laying adult fly in the spring. The best thing to do

this time of year to stem the onslaught of these pestiferous creatures next year is to continuously pick up and dispose of all the fruit that has fallen on the ground. Do not compost the fruit. Put the fruit in a sealed plastic bag into your garbage can.