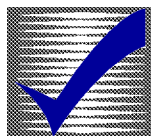




## HOW-TO BOOKLET #3142

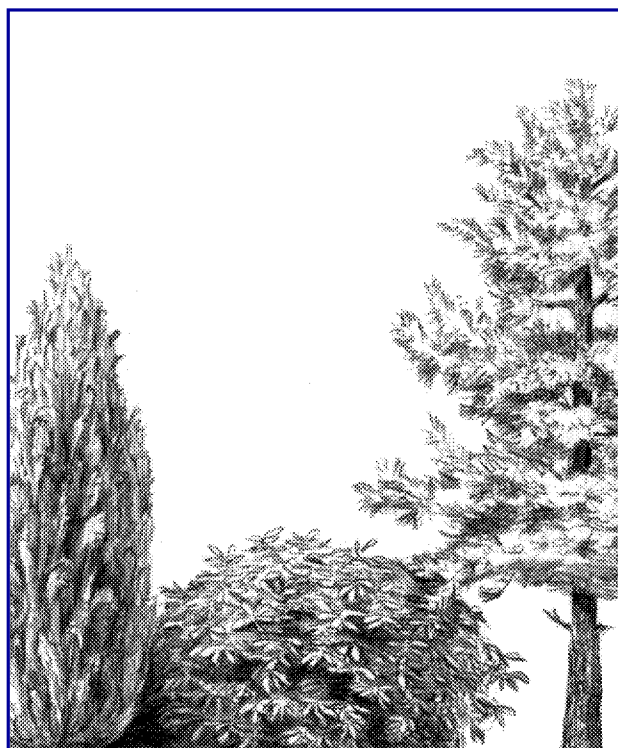
# EVERGREEN TREES & SHRUBS



### TOOL & MATERIAL CHECKLIST

- Tine Rake
- Garden Fork
- Tarpaulin
- Garden Hose
- Wheelbarrow or Garden Cart
- Spade
- Mulch
- Shrubs
- Trees
- Wooden Stakes
- Pruning Shears
- Wire or Heavy Twine
- Pocketknife

***Read This Entire How-To Booklet For Specific Tools and Materials Not Noted in The Basics Listed Above***



Evergreen trees and shrubs provide continuity in our home landscapes, a reassuring presence through the changing seasons. They are useful plants, sheltering us from wind, rain, and snow as well as creating privacy, obscuring nearby eyesores, and providing food and protection to birds and other wildlife. And they are beautiful, offering a delightful variety of foliage, flower, and form.

Long-lived and often sizable, these plants are important elements in any home landscape and should be chosen carefully. In this How-To Booklet, we'll introduce evergreen trees and shrubs, suggest ways you can use them, and outline how to get started growing them.

### WHAT IS AN EVERGREEN TREE OR SHRUB?

Plants that retain their leaves year-round are called evergreens. Of course, these plants drop and replace leaves, but they usually do it a few at a time. When many people think of evergreen trees and shrubs, they're likely to think of pines, spruces, and junipers, plants whose leaves are long and thin like needles or tiny and layered like scales on a fish. These plants produce seeds in woody "cones" and are called conifers.

Another group of evergreens have leaves in as wide a variety of sizes and shapes as do their deciduous cousins. These "broad-leaved" evergreens include rhododendrons, hollies, live oaks, acacias, eucalypts, euonymus, and citrus.

There is no hard and fast dividing line between trees and shrubs. In general, trees have a single stem,

or trunk, whereas shrubs have multiple stems. But yaupon holly, a small evergreen tree, can have numerous stems, while a low-growing “shrubby” juniper may have only one. Size isn’t much help either; a rhododendron can outstrip many small trees in height. Some plants can be either trees or shrubs, depending on how they’re trained and pruned. Fortunately, most of us “know” a shrub or a tree when we see one, based on a commonsense judgment involving height, growth habit, and landscape use.

### USES IN THE LANDSCAPE

Evergreens are versatile plants. In addition to the uses mentioned above, they can muffle noise, provide shade, define the boundaries of our property, and delineate spaces for recreation, entertaining, and other activities within those boundaries.

They exhibit a variety of shapes and sizes suitable for many purposes. Ground-hugging junipers are ideal for ground covers; a majestic spruce can anchor a large-scale composition. Coniferous trees tend to be conical when young, but with age a number of them, such as Japanese black pine and Tanyosho pine, become strikingly picturesque, their branches gnarled, their profile irregular. Some conifers have weeping forms. Some are amazingly maleable—yew, for example, can become a 40-ft. tree or a dense, closely cropped hedge. Broad-leaved evergreen trees are almost as varied in form as are their deciduous counterparts. Broad-leaved and coniferous evergreen shrubs take a wide variety of forms naturally and can be trained to almost any shape.

**Creating shade.** We don’t usually think of conifers as shade trees—many lack a spreading crown and adequate headroom beneath for lounging, and their dense foliage often casts a deep shade that is inhospitable to many understory plants. However, making use of the shade cast beside these plants, rather than beneath them, you can effectively cool a patio or lessen heat buildup in parts of the house with eastern or southern exposures.

Broad-leaved evergreens can be excellent shade trees, offering a variety of forms and leaf densities to suit a range of shading needs. Large, spreading trees with lots of leaves, such as California live oak or Moreton Bay fig, cast a deep shade conducive to solitary musings. Smaller leaves and an upright form, found in some acacias and eucalypts, for example, provide a cheerful atmosphere of dappled sunlight encouraging more convivial gatherings and supportive of a wider range of understory plants.

**Large broad-leaved shade trees:** • Blue gum  
• Indian laurel • Live oak • Southern magnolia

**Smaller shade trees:** • Silver wattle • Olive  
• Evergreen ash • Yaupon holly • Bottlebrush

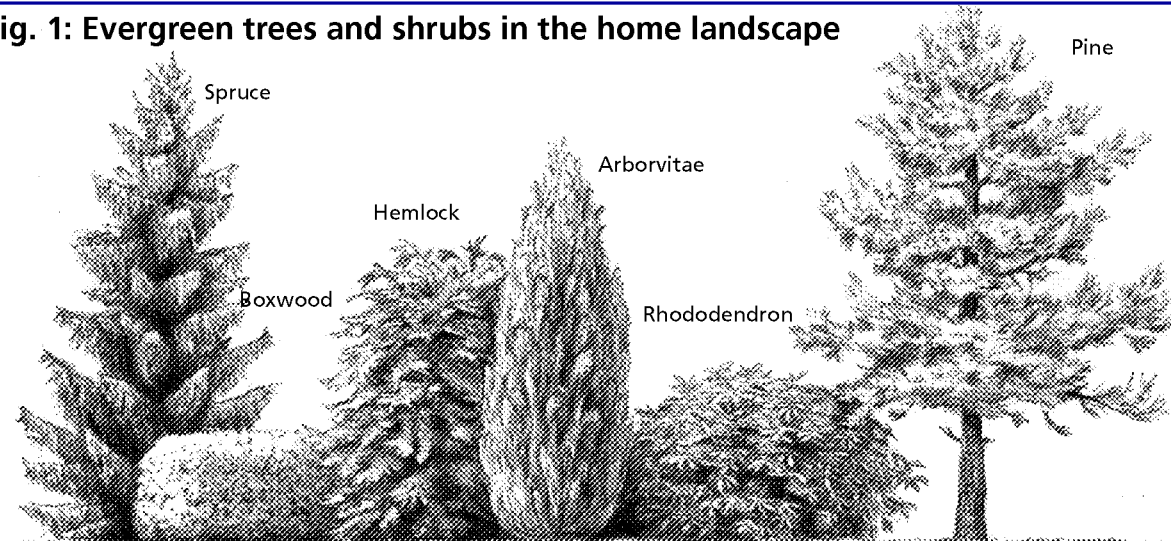
**Screening and privacy.** Trees and shrubs can keep others from observing our private activities, block unwanted views from our eyes, frame a desirable vista, create “outdoor rooms” on our property, or form a backdrop or enclosure for plantings of flowers. With their dense foliage and

regular forms, conifers are ideal for many of these purposes. Because they retain their leaves, broad-leaved evergreen shrubs have an advantage over their deciduous relatives for year-round screens.

Some coniferous trees and shrubs, such as hemlock and yew, and broad-leaved plants, such as boxwood, can be trained and sheared to create formal hedges ranging in height from less than a foot to over 20 ft. Plants for formal sheared hedges should retain leaf-covered branches near the ground, and the leaves should be small and closely spaced on the stem. Avoid plants such as cypresses, which do not sprout new growth on old wood, because they cannot be rejuvenated if they get out of hand. Evergreens with unruly growth or large leaves are better suited to informal or “natural” hedges and screens, which are pruned lightly if at all.

Trees and shrubs, singly or in groups, can screen unwanted views and protect us from wind and driving rain and snow. A row of columnar incense cedars can block out large, nearby objects such as a

**Fig. 1: Evergreen trees and shrubs in the home landscape**



**Ensuring privacy,** screening views, enhancing the house, marking boundaries, or giving pleasure with their flowers, foliage, and forms, evergreen trees and shrubs are a useful and enjoyable addition to any home landscape.

neighbor's house. By placing a single tree in the line of sight, you can block a view of a distant object from a picture window, patio, or other specific vantage point.

**Plants for formal hedges:** • Osmanthus • Privet • Hollies • Pittosporum • Cherry laurel

**Plants for natural screens:** • Camellia • Abelia • Wax myrtle • Nandina • Barberry • Euonymus • Mahonia • Sweet olive • Oleander

**Planting for pleasure.** While many evergreens are generally less flamboyant than deciduous trees and shrubs, they are no less beautiful. Green is certainly the dominant color, but evergreen foliage also ranges across yellow, blue, and reddish hues. Broad-leaved evergreens, such as rhododendrons, gardenias, and citrus, can provide spectacular, sometimes fragrant, floral displays. What conifers lack in flowers, they provide with striking cones or colorful berries. Scots pine, lacebark pine, and others have attractive bark.

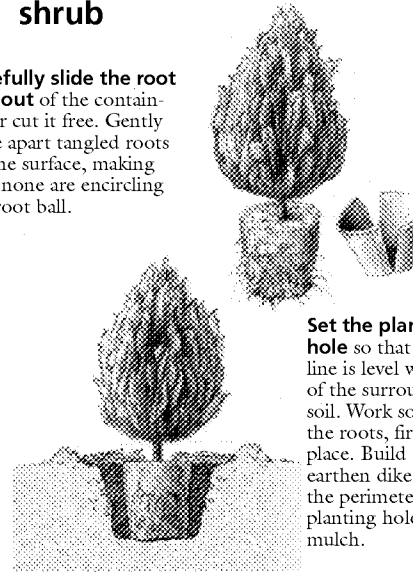
Evergreens have long been used to complement, accent, or mask architecture. Today's foundation plantings (groups of shrubs and small trees set close to the house) can be more imaginative than the traditional arrangements of sheared shrubs either side of the front door. In them, you'll find flowering broad-leaved evergreens such as rhododendrons, abelia, and bottlebrush, and distinctive conifers such as Japanese black pine or mugo pine. You can make striking plantings of evergreens elsewhere—plan them like flower beds or borders, combining shapes, colors, and textures for greatest effect. Evergreens can also provide focal points or foils for perennials in mixed beds and borders. Consider dwarf conifers for rock gardens, or grow them in containers on the deck.

**Eye-catching evergreen trees:** • Bottlebrush • Southern magnolia • Japanese black pine • Loquat • Madrone

**Attractive shrubs:** • Rhododendron • Camellia • Mahonia • Ceanothus • Heather • Viburnum • Japanese pieris

**Fig. 2: Planting a container-grown shrub**

Carefully slide the root ball out of the container, or cut it free. Gently tease apart tangled roots on the surface, making sure none are encircling the root ball.



Set the plant in its hole so that its soil line is level with that of the surrounding soil. Work soil around the roots, firming it in place. Build a low earthen dike around the perimeter of the planting hole and add mulch.

**The right plant for the site.** Because trees and shrubs are long-lived and often expensive, make sure they are well suited for the conditions on your site. Consider their preferences for temperature, sunlight, water, and soil. If you live with sweltering summers, drying winds, high humidity, or drought, take those conditions into account, too.

Trees and shrubs must be able to withstand the rigors of seasonal change. The most common measure of this ability is the minimum temperature a plant can survive. Horticulturists have divided the country into 11 “hardiness zones,” based on average minimum temperatures. The hardiness zone rating is frequently noted on plant labels and in catalogs.

Given the large amounts of water required by many trees and shrubs, it makes sense to select those whose needs correspond to the normal rainfall in your area. Similarly, it is difficult, if not impossible, to alter large areas of soil for the extensive root systems of many trees and shrubs. Homeowners in the Southwest, for example, where soils are typically

alkaline, will avoid disappointment and save money if they don't try to grow rhododendrons, which are more at home in acidic soils.

Don't forget to consider the mature size of the plant. A full-grown Norway spruce can overwhelm a small lot; junipers that tuck in nicely beneath a picture window when young can block the view in a few years. Rather than devote yourself to years of nonstop pruning, choose plants whose mature size will be in keeping with their place in your landscape.

Well-chosen trees and shrubs are more likely to succeed for you and to require less regular care. Knowledgeable staff at a nursery or garden center can help identify plants that will serve your purposes while doing well in your conditions.

## PLANTING AND INITIAL CARE

Evergreen trees and shrubs are commonly sold in several ways. “Balled-and-burlapped” plants are dug from a growing field while dormant, the mass of roots and attached soil (the “ball”) wrapped in some material (formerly burlap, now often plastic). Trees and shrubs are also grown and sold in plastic or metal containers, a method that allows the plant to retain all its roots. You can plant balled-and-burlapped and container-grown plants from spring to fall in cold-winter areas and from fall to spring where winters are mild.

When you select a tree or shrub, examine it carefully. Avoid plants with damaged bark or branches. Moist soil and healthy-looking leaves (not wilted, discolored, or easily dislodged) are some indication of adequate care at the nursery. Roots growing on top of or out of the bottom of a container are signs that the plant has been too long in its pot.

While most homeowners can plant small trees and shrubs with little difficulty, large balled-and-burlapped plants pose daunting problems of transportation and planting. Nurseries selling these large plants will usually offer planting services or be able to recommend capable professionals.



### Preparing the planting hole.

- 1 The hole should be big enough to accommodate the root ball easily. Depth is critical; the tree or shrub should be planted no deeper than it has been growing. This is easy to determine on container-grown plants. On balled-and-burlapped plants, look for a change of color near the juncture of stem and roots. Don't disturb the soil at the bottom of the hole or it will settle, placing the stem or trunk too deep.
- 2 Dig the soil, and place it on a tarp nearby; remove rocks and other debris. Recent research shows that trees and large shrubs do best when planted in native, unamended soil. Small shrubs placed in beds with perennials will do fine in the amended soil.
- 3 With a rake or garden fork, loosen the soil on the sides of the hole to encourage root penetration into surrounding soil.
- 4 Poor drainage can doom a plant. To check, fill the hole with water; if the water is gone within 24 hours, drainage is fine. If much water remains, consider planting in another, better-drained spot.
- 5 Strong winds can damage newly planted trees. To provide support, drive two sturdy

stakes on opposite sides of the planting hole and a foot or so outside its perimeter. Secure the trunk of the tree to the stakes with strong twine or wire. (Protect the trunk from abrasion by threading the wire through a section of old garden hose.) The fastenings should allow some movement, so the trunk grows strong enough to withstand the wind.

### Planting container-grown. (Fig. 2)

- 1 Before planting, soak the container. When the soil is moist but not soggy, slide off or cut off the container. Try to disturb the root ball as little as possible, but if there are a great many roots visible on the surface of the ball, gently untangle them.
- 2 Carefully place the plant in the hole, spreading disentangled roots so they don't encircle the ball.
- 3 Fill the hole about halfway with the soil you removed, working it in with your hands to eliminate air pockets. Adjust the trunk of a tree so it is upright and orient the stems of a shrub as you wish.
- 4 Fill the hole with water; when it has drained, add the remaining soil, tamping it firmly.

- 5 Build a small soil mound around the circumference of the planting hole to help hold water. A generous mulch of chipped bark, compost, or other organic material will retard evaporation.

### Planting balled-and-burlapped. (Fig. 3)

In some ways, a balled-and-burlapped plant can be thought of as growing in a large flexible container. Keep the soil moist, both to protect the plant and to hold the root ball together. In the past, when balled plants were wrapped in real burlap, the wrapping was left in place during planting because it rotted off in time. Today's wrappings are likely to be synthetic and must be removed, or they will kill the plant.

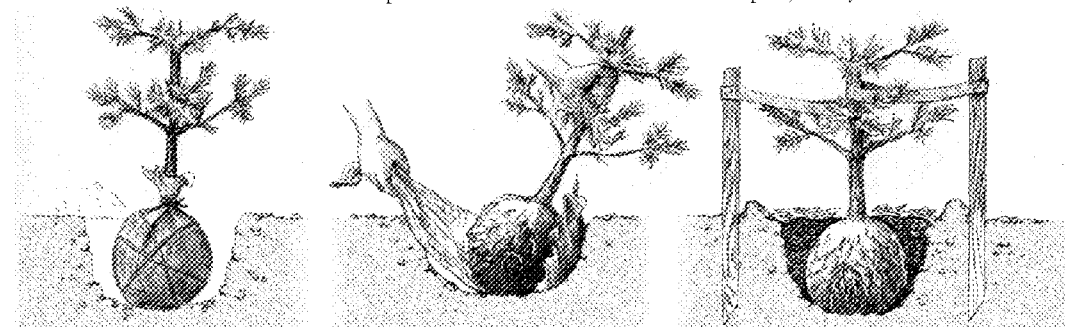
- 1 Supporting the plant under the ball, not by the trunk or stems, move it next to the planting hole.
- 2 Cut the twine and begin to unwrap the ball. If the root ball and soil are firmly intact, lift the ball carefully and place it in the hole. If the root ball is fragile, leave it wrapped while lowering it into the hole. There, unwrap and carefully shift the ball so you can slide the wrap out from under it.
- 3 From this point, proceed as described for container-grown plants.

**Fig. 3: Planting a balled-and-burlapped tree**

If the root ball is loose, keep it wrapped as you lower it into the hole.

Shifting the plant carefully to preserve the root ball, remove the synthetic "burlap" and twine.

Half-fill the hole with native soil and soak it thoroughly. After it has drained, add soil up to ground level, tamping it in place. Build a low earthen dike, add mulch, then water. In windy spots, loosely tether the tree to stakes.



### Providing a good start.

Purchased from a reputable nursery or garden center, a new tree or shrub should not require pruning other than trimming branches damaged in transport or planting. If gnawing critters, such as rabbits, are in the area, you can protect the trunk with a wrapping of aluminum foil, extended above the height of anticipated snow cover.

Providing a regular supply of water is most important in the first year, even for drought-tolerant plants. Dry winters are especially hard on evergreens. Trees usually don't need fertilizer in the first year; in the second and subsequent years, sprinkle a light dressing of a balanced granular fertilizer (10-10-10) on the soil in early spring.