

Seasonal Needle Drop of Conifers



TREE DOCTOR TIPS

Seasonal Needle Drop of Conifers

DESCRIPTION:

Coniferous trees often lose their aging needles on a 2-3 years natural life cycle. Aging needles turn yellow, then brown and drop.

HOSTS:

Conifers that experience normal, seasonal needle drop include pines, spruces, arborvitae, junipers and firs. Some deciduous evergreens, such as larches (also known as tamaracks), dawn redwoods and bald cypresses lose all their needles every year. Yews lose old needles in spring or early summer.

BIOLOGY AND SYMPTOMS:

Normal needle drop in conifers usually starts in autumn with the tree's older, inner needles. Not all conifers lose their needles at the same rate or in the same numbers. Needle drop may not be noticeable except in loosely-needled trees, such as white pines.

If needle drop occurs during the growing season, or if an isolated patch of yellowing needles becomes larger, the tree may be under stress from drought, root damage, excessive heat, flooding, insect pests or disease.

MANAGEMENT:

No action is necessary to control seasonal needle drop, since it is a natural, regular occurrence. New needles appear in spring and the tree will green up again.

If new-growth needles drop, or needle drop is excessive, evaluate your conifer to see if pests, disease, inadequate watering or other issues need to be addressed. Your local arborist can help you diagnose and manage these problems. Keep trees healthy with good cultural practices.



A



B



C

FIGURE A. SEASONAL NEEDLE DROP ON THE GROUND UNDER PINE ROWS
FIGURE B. A PINE WITH NORMAL, AGING BROWN NEEDLES THAT WILL DROP
FIGURE C. ROWS OF DAWN REDWOODS THAT LOSE ALL THEIR NEEDLES EACH YEAR

The scientists at **The Davey Institute Research and Diagnostic Laboratories** support our arborists and technicians in diagnosing and prescribing based on the latest arboricultural science. For specific treatment and application details, your arborist may consult The Davey Institute's Plant Health Care Treatment Guide.

Scan the QR code to learn more about insects and diseases that may impact your property.

