

# Our living landscape

Our living landscape is dedicated to providing **Tips, Talk and Tech** on issues that help us to better understand our relationship with nature at our homes and places of work.

***Thuja Occidentalis 'Nigra'***- Dark American Arborvitae- A large 40'-60' dark growing evergreen.



This is an effective evergreen for a wind screen, provides shelter for birds in the winter and consistently looks lush and healthy with little maintenance.

## Can your landscape benefit you in the winter months?

Even as we tend to stay more inside during the winter months, our landscapes are often ignored and may seem useless in the winter. When you think of the impacts that snow and the cold have on you and your house, there are a few elements in the landscape that can help you to conserve energy, decrease heat loss in your home and make your paved areas safer.

Shade trees are great in the summer to keep the Sun's rays from heating your house. Those same shade trees should allow the Sun to heat up as much surface area on your house in the winter, **maximizing solar radiation**. Unnecessary trees should be cut to help allow for the sun's exposure, which is facing the southern compass point.

Winds typically seem higher in the winter months than the summer months as the deciduous trees no longer have their leaves to slow down the wind. Average wind speeds are greater, closer to the ground and will carry snow during storms. Not only is the wind cold on your exposed skin, it cools your house faster than if it weren't there. A **wind screen** can slow down the wind and with that allow the snow to drop and not be carried by the wind, thus preventing snow drifts against your house. Wind screens are best made as a planted grouping of evergreens on the northwest side of your house.

Whether it's your driveway or walkway to your front door, these paved areas will need to be cleaned of snow to be safe. **Darker paved surfaces** will melt faster than lighter colored ones, capitalizing on the sun's rays. Having these darker surfaces can help you rely less on the ice melting products for ice-free paved surfaces that aren't good for your lawn and the environment.

## Winter Pruning

It is a good time of year to prune most deciduous hardwoods including flowering ornamental trees such as Apples, Cherries and Pears. Trees that should not be pruned

this time of year are Maples, Conifers (such as Pines), and any other sap running trees. Pruning can be a very in-depth and tree specific practice, however, some guidelines can help to determine where and why a tree will need these procedures. Pruning will allow more sunlight to enter the canopy, thus allowing the interior branches and the under story to flourish from the residual light. Pruning will help to strengthen the branches you choose to keep for support of fruit on an apple or pear tree. Pruning a tree can dwarf its growth and is intended to control its size so it may better fit into an area it was planted living longer than if it were not pruned. Once pruned, a tree will become invigorated, supplying the remainder of the branches and leaves with more nutrients that would have been supplying the whole tree prior to pruning. Start pruning by eliminating the dead, dying branches or branches that criss-cross each other and show chaffing that will become a problem later. Prune "suckers", the new growth (usually vertical) and other branches having no use within the model of how you want the tree to look. Start pruning smaller branches, eventually working your way to larger ones.

-----If you have any suggestions on future issues, let us know.-----

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