



Pine and Spruce Needle Drop

Symptoms:

If needles turn brown from the interior of pine or spruce trees, and the outer needles stay green, there is no cause for alarm. This is a naturally occurring process called needle drop.

Evergreen trees also lose their old needles some time in late summer or fall. Needle age, at which drop occurs, varies among evergreens and within species. Eastern white pine loses two-year-old needles. On the other extreme, bristlecone pine sheds needles that are 14-17 years old. Colorado spruce needles last 8-10 years, Ponderosa pine needles for 304 years and Austrian pine for 4 years.

If there is yellowing or die-back on the tips of branches, there may be a problem. Consider possible causes including drought, salts, root damage, spray damage, soil compaction, conifer aphids, mountain pine beetle and other factors. Occasionally, "Deciduous conifers" such as bald cypress, larch and dawn redwood are found in Colorado landscapes. These conifers lose all their needles every autumn, to be replaced the following spring.

Treatment:

This is a completely natural process and therefore no action is necessary. Remember, natural needle drop only affects the interior needles of the tree. If you suspect another issue, contact Swingle for a free tree evaluation.

