

Conifer Kingdom

The World of Conifers: From miniature specimens to gigantic evergreens, the selection is endless! Multiple shades of green, yellows, blues and wonderful variation in textures and forms. There is a conifer around to thrive in almost every spot in the landscape!

- With so much green in our area, consider the many blue, yellow, white and other variegated forms of the conifers that are available to PNW gardeners. These colors will pop in the landscape and shine in the winter months.
- You get what you pay for.... Want slow? Look at the growth rates. Want big? Make sure to give your conifer room. Want small? Pay a little more for a dwarf/miniature. Remember, put the right plant in the right place!
- Look at growth habits – Tall and stately? Upright broad? Weeping? Globe shaped? Low and spreading? Don't assume "Dwarf" means small tidy in all cases. You may really want a "Miniature" conifer for a small garden spot.
- Take into consideration if you need to prune, and choose ones that can be sheared. Some species are easy to control and shape, if desired, others need to be essentially left alone.
- Conifers will provide structure and evergreen presence in your yard through the winter months. Once all the deciduous plants lose their foliage and the perennials go dormant, these will shine in NW winters, and all year long for that matter!
- Many types are drought tolerant, once established, and are also deer resistant too.

Planting & Care of Conifers

- **Placement in the landscape and planting:** Watch drainage on some varieties! Always strive to get the right plant into the right place, especially with conifers. Look at the ultimate size of your selection and its approximate growth rate. Do you have enough room for it long term?
- **Planting of container grown versus field grown specimens:** Always amend your soil with some good compost - 1/3 to 2/3 of native soil for backfill. Be sure to never plant too deep, as many are grafted. A little higher and drier is the way to go with conifers. The roots of container grown specimens can be lightly scored at planting to loosen them up a bit. NEVER remove the burlap on field grown conifers! Place the entire rootball into a hole at the proper depth, then untie twine around the trunk, cut out the top of the burlap and bury. A cracked root ball means a cashed conifer in the coming season!

- **Fertilizing:** Use acidic/Rhododendron type food each spring (March), and if needed, a second dose in late May/June to help with summer growth. To be honest Tree/Shrub or an All Purpose type will work just as well. Be sure to apply inside the drip-line and mulch over it, or scratch/wash the food into the ground. Avoid fertilizing in fall/winter unless transplanting/adding new ones – use a gentle organic transplanter like Sure Start for this.
- **Pruning/Maintenance:** Remember, some conifers can be pruned while others are a little tougher. You can never cut into bare wood on any conifer and expect it to re-grow! Look at the difference between whorl-type conifers and random branched ones when you are choosing. Recommendation – do a light pruning every season or every other season if needed, never wait 5 years and then try to go back to shape it as it was before - this will not work with conifers!
- **Insects, diseases, and flagging each fall:** Always ask an expert and provide pictures and samples of what is happening. Many issues with conifers may be cultural and not insect/disease related. Keep in mind “flagging” with these plants – even though they are “evergreens”, conifers will shed their old needles in the heat of late summer/fall, especially in our climate with drier summers. This is a natural process and does not mean something has gone awry. With the weather we have had in summer 2022 – this is quite noticeable on many in our area this season.

The Genus Breakdown...

- **Abies:** True Firs, including giants, weepers, and some awesome dwarfs and minis
- **Cedrus:** True Cedars, including some giants, weepers and dwarfs
- **Cephalotaxus:** Japanese Plum Yews – nice foliage, texture and form
- **Chamaecyparis:** Hinoki Cypress, Threadbranch Cypress, Lawson’s Cypress
- **Cryptomeria:** Japanese Cedars of all kinds – great texture and color in all sizes
- **Cupressocyparis:** Leyland Cypress - Hybrid of Chamaecyparis and Cupressus
- **Cupressus:** True Cypress Trees, like Monterey Cypress, Arizona Cypress
- **Ginkgo:** The Original prehistoric Conifer with “foliage” – very cool!
- **Juniperus:** The Junipers, and not the same old ones either!
- **Larix:** The Larch Tree – weepers, shrubs and trees that turn gold in every fall
- **Metasequoia:** The Dawn Redwood – Big old prehistoric deciduous conifer
- **Microbiota:** The Russian Cypress – good bullet proof plant in shade or sun
- **Picea:** The Spruce Tree – nice selection of forms and colors, especially blue!
- **Pinus:** The Pine Tree – huge array of choices from small shrubs to giants

- **Podocarpus:** The Plum or Yew Pine – hardy flavors with unique colors
- **Pseudotsuga:** Our Native Douglas Fir – look for blue variety, great color
- **Sciadopitys:** The Japanese Umbrella Pine – nice variety of dwarf ones now
- **Sequoiadendron:** The Giant Sequoia Tree – big trees and narrow weepers
- **Taxodium:** The Bald or Swamp Cypress – take wet areas in the yard
- **Taxus:** Yews of all kinds, including Japanese and English varieties
- **Thuja:** The Western Cedars/Arborvitaes – useful for hedging, focal points
- **Thujopsis:** The Staghorn Cedar – easy deer-proof conifer
- **Tsuga:** The Hemlock Trees – great dwarf, weeping and upright ones

Check out our website, www.sunnysidenursery.net/conifers, to see pictures of many of these options. We also have a printable list of the varieties we typically have in stock.

We also recommend checking on www.iselinursery.com, the website of the finest wholesale conifer grower in the world - which many of our plants come from. They are wholesale only, but have excellent pictures and cultural information on specific cultivars on their website. Look them up by the genus list shown above!