



Q. How do I protect arborvitae from the harsh, cold winter?

A. Winter injury can occur on a broad range of evergreen and deciduous plants. Damage results from many environmental factors including temperature extremes, freeze-thaw cycles, drying winds, lack of snow cover, and warm autumn temperatures that promote late-season growth. You have several options for protecting these plants from winter injury.

Mulch: Applying a layer of mulch 2 to 2 1/2 inches deep after the soil freezes helps maintain a more even soil temperature and retain soil moisture.

Tie: Arborvitae may be damaged by the weight of snow or ice, so to prevent plant breakage fasten heavy twine at the base of the plant and wind it spirally around and upward to the top and back down in a reverse spiral. This technique is needed when the plants become larger and begin to open at the top.

Wrap: A wrap of burlap or canvas can offer protection to plants against desiccation from sun and wind, and drift from de-icing salts applied to roads and driveways. Wrap the “body” of the evergreens, but don’t cover the top of the plant, as some light is necessary during the winter.

Apply anti-desiccants: Anti-desiccants can help reduce transpiration water losses. Two applications per season, one in December and another in February, will provide protection all winter

Got questions? UNH Cooperative Extension's Family, Home & Garden Education Center Info Line offers practical help finding answers for your lawn and garden questions. Call toll free at 1-877-398-4769, M-F, 9:00 a.m.-2:00 p.m., and W 5:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m., or e-mail us at answers@unh.edu

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