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Winter Protection of Trees & Shrubs

The ravages of winter can be really hard on our Minnesota grown plants. They can be damaged by an early and sudden freeze that comes in fall before they are fully hardened for winter. Some can be killed or injured by extreme temperature lows in mid-winter.

Evergreens such as yew, hemlocks, and arborvitae are susceptible to winter burn. This condition develops when the sun reflects off the snow surface causing a temperature buildup in the leaves, which is followed by a sudden temperature drop when the sun disappears behind a cloud or obstacle (like a building). This sudden drop in temperature causes the formation of ice crystals within living plant cells resulting in their death. Winter burn can be avoided by planting them where they will receive winter shade. A burlap shade will also protect them if they are planted where they are subject to winter burn.

Rhododendrons & Azaleas

Rhododendrons exposed to the winter sun will be brown in the spring and most of the flower buds will be killed. By stretching burlap around a wooden frame to shade the plant from the winter sun and dehydrating winds, you can enjoy the beauty of this plant in glorious bloom next spring.

Rhododendrons and azaleas are among the hardiest of plants. But even cold hardy plants need additional protection. Make sure plants are going into winter with adequate moisture. Water well if we don't receive enough rainfall. Wait until the ground freezes, then place a thick mulch around the plant(s). This will help the ground frozen until the real spring thaw occurs.