

# How to Create a Natural Landscape

**Ecological Landscaping** is a method of designing, building, and maintaining landscapes that considers the ecology of a site and creates a sustainable environment for the benefit of people, plants, insects and wildlife. Ecological landscaping strives to balance the building site with the natural environment. The sustainably built landscape will conserve natural resources, preserve biodiversity, and protect the environment. With proper design and maintenance, each component in the landscape; people, plants, water, soil, insects, and wildlife, will begin to interact together in a sustainable way.

## The Five Steps to an Ecological Landscape

**1 Plan the Site:** Evaluate and inventory your site — consider the soil make up, sun exposure, and existing plants. Use a professional landscape designer to create a plan that fits your lifestyle and provides habitat for wildlife and beneficial insects.

**2 Protect Soil:** Conserve the topsoil you have — don't remove, compact or destroy. Avoid working wet soil — it destroys soil structure. Add compost to improve heavy clay soils, and enhance soil biology.

**3 Planting Options:** Properly plant (not too deep) a diverse mix of trees and shrubs that are adapted to your soil and climate type. Use native plants or plants that are adapted to the site conditions.

**4 Landscape Maintenance:** Apply mulches to conserve moisture, improve soil and prevent weeds. Use Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and organic pesticides and fertilizers (*Our Soil Health Program uses 100% organic fertilizers and compost tea.*)

**5 Water Usage:** Use water-saving irrigation heads, and smart irrigation controllers with rain sensors to reduce water usage. Establish a rain garden — a depression planted with native wetland plants that allow rainwater runoff from surfaces like roofs, and driveways and encourages water absorption into the ground while filtering out pollutants.

See our website ([collierarbor.com](http://collierarbor.com)) for additional details on the Five Steps to an Ecological Landscape.

## We're Here to Help

Collier Arbor Care is here to assist you with your tree, shrub and lawn care needs. If you would like more information on any of our services listed below, please give us a call or visit our website for valuable plant information.

- |                                      |                        |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Plant Health Care Programs           | Tree & Shrub Nutrition |
| Targeted Insect & Disease Treatments | Soil Health Care       |
| Pruning Trees & Shrubs               | Hazard Tree Analysis   |
| Tree Removal & Stump Grinding        | Landscape Weed Control |
| Organic Lawn Care                    | Consulting & Diagnosis |

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[www.collierarbor.com](http://www.collierarbor.com)



# Garden Calendar

See our website at [www.collierarbor.com](http://www.collierarbor.com) for a 12 month calendar!

## November

- Apply lime to lawns.
- Treat roots of trees and shrubs with beneficial mycorrhizae fungus to increase rooting, nutrient uptake, and help protect from certain root diseases.
  - Plan erosion control; use mulches, fir boughs, etc., to prevent compaction from rain and from soil washing.
  - Rake and compost leaves that are free of diseases or insects.
  - Provide winter protection to built-in sprinkler systems; drain the system, insulate the valve mechanisms.
  - Reduce fertilizer applications to houseplants.
  - Prepare lawn mower, other garden equipment for winter storage. Drain and store hoses carefully to avoid damage from freezing.

## December

- Cut holly for holiday decorations.
- Make holiday decorations from trees and shrubs in the yard.
- Tie limbs of columnar evergreens to prevent snow breakage.
- Subsurface fertilize ornamental trees and shrubs to enhance spring growth and health.

## January

- Plant bare-root deciduous fruit and shade trees.
- Have a soil test performed on your garden, lawn or landscape soil. If soil pH is below 5.5 (very acidic) then you need to add large amounts of lime to raise the pH to an optimum 6.0 to 6.5.
- Treat with dormant sprays of lime sulfur or copper for general disease control of fruit trees, peaches for leaf curl and roses.
- Prune fruit trees. Thin suckers, remove deadwood and increase light penetration.
- Plan now for garden improvements. Order seeds for planting vegetables and flowers.

## February

- Fertilize lawns; use iron products for moss control if necessary.
  - Tune up lawn mower and garden equipment before the busy season.
- Check spruce trees for aphids and treat with insecticidal soap if found.
- Prune roses back to 3-6 vigorous canes, knee high after mid-February.
- Good time to plant new roses.
- Systemic aphid treatment on susceptible trees like: birch, oaks, maples, and tulip trees.
- Services performed by Collier Arbor Care

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2012 marks our 75th year of tree, shrub and yard service to the Portland metro area!

# THE Arbor Advisor

Your Prescription for a Sustainable Landscape

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## In this issue...



An eco-landscape is one that mimics a natural ecosystem with a diverse selection of large trees, smaller understory, shrubs, and groundcover.

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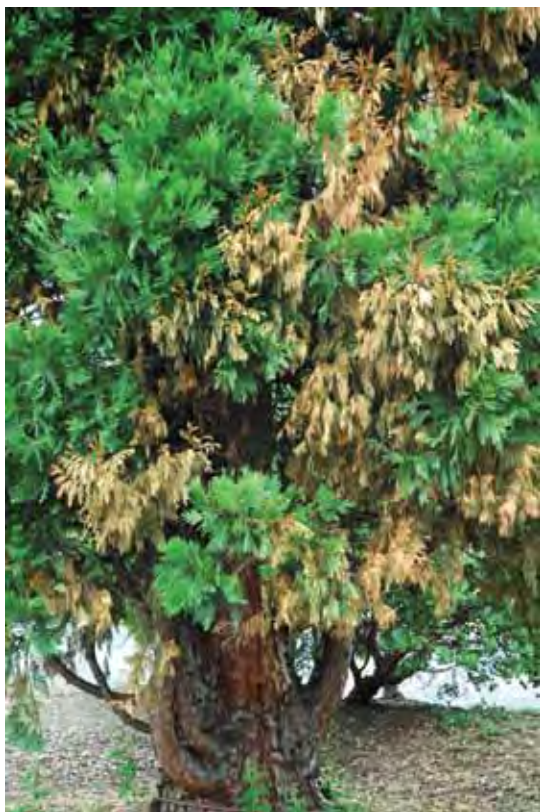
# Natural Browning of Evergreen Trees

Every fall our office is inundated with calls from clients concerned about brown foliage on their evergreen trees. They are convinced that the trees are dying. However, in most cases, there is nothing to be concerned about. What is happening is commonly called evergreen foliage drop, a natural shedding of the oldest foliage.

All trees and shrubs renew their foliage annually, producing new leaves in the spring and shedding the old leaves in the fall. The leaves of deciduous trees, like maples and oaks, are alive for just one growing season and then fall off usually in a blaze of color in the autumn. Foliage of evergreen trees lives from one to several years old, depending on the species. As new growth emerges in the spring, the older growth becomes shaded and its role in photosynthesis is diminished. Later in the year this inner or older foliage dies, turns a reddish brown and is shed, especially in the fall. This is a normal and annual occurrence.

In some evergreen species like pines, cedars, arborvitae and sequoia, this fall browning can take place rather suddenly. Sometimes this natural occurrence is hardly noticed, but this year it is especially noticeable, and people are concerned.

The natural foliage drop can be distinguished from disease by its uniform browning appearing evenly throughout the whole tree. Look around at other neighboring trees of the same species and



Seiridium Canker disease causing unnatural whole branch dieback.



Interior foliage is turning brown—a normal occurrence.

you will observe similar symptoms. The shedding is confined to the innermost or oldest foliage or needles. The amount of foliage drop depends on the vigor of the tree, and of the preceding growing season especially in a drought year.

However, there are other serious disease problems that can cause foliage browning. Diseases cause symptoms and dieback that is a random pattern, scattered, not uniform in the tree. For example, we are experiencing a canker disease called Seiridium in incense cedars that causes a scattered (not uniform) but severe branch and foliage dieback. Large branches and attached foliage will turn brown and die usually in the lower half of

the tree. Diseased branches should be removed for management of the disease.

So do not be concerned if the new, terminal or current year's growth is green and vigorous, the health of the tree is not in jeopardy from natural foliage drop in evergreens.

For more information on specific diseases, visit our web site at [collierarbor.com](http://collierarbor.com).

## Featured Tree:

### Weeping Alaska Cedar

The weeping Alaska cedar is a native conifer found growing from Alaska all the way down to Oregon and can achieve heights up to 80'. The *Chamaecyparis nootkatensis* 'Pendula' is a fine variety that forms an outstanding sculptural specimen.

The 'Pendula' cultivar is a slender, pyramidal, strongly weeping form that grows slowly to 35' tall and 12' wide over its lifespan. It is an excellent specimen tree that features a nodding central leader with graceful pendant branches that sweep upwards at the end. The rich green foliage hangs like curtains from the branches, creating a graceful accent in the landscape.

The weeping Alaska cedar grows best in full sun and in acidic but well drained moist soil. It is tolerant of poor, heavy clay soils.



Weeping cedars are drought tolerant once established in the landscape. This tree is relatively pest free. A valuable characteristic of this species is its high resistance to Phytophthora root rot. This means it can be used to replace other species that have succumbed to this insidious disease.

If you want an even narrower variety, try the 'Green Arrow'. It grows 30' tall but only 4' wide.



## Great Landscapes Begin with Proper Mulching

"To mulch or not to mulch?" It's a question that's often asked. However, for knowledgeable gardeners mulch is recognized as one of the most important cultural practices you can do for your plants. Maintaining your landscape plants in a healthy growing condition is important for your property value as well as the aesthetic benefit. A mulched landscape not only looks good, but also provides a wonderful environment for root growth. Mulching, coupled with the Collier Arbor Care Soil Health Care Program of organic fertilizer and Compost Tea, are the single best things you can do to care for your plants and your soil — and to keep your yard beautiful.

### Benefits of Mulch

- Helps maintain soil moisture. Evaporation is reduced, and the need for watering can be minimized.
- Helps control weeds. A two to four inch layer of mulch will reduce the germination and growth of weeds.
- Mulch serves as nature's insulating blanket. Mulch keeps soils warmer in the winter and cooler in the summer.
- Many types of mulch can improve soil aeration, structure (aggregation of soil particles), and drainage over time.
- Composted mulch can improve soil fertility.
- A layer of mulch can inhibit certain plant diseases.
- Mulching around trees helps facilitate maintenance and can reduce the likelihood of damage from "weed whackers" or the dreaded "lawn mower blight."
- Mulch can give planting beds a uniform, well-cared-for look.

While mulching has a cost, its many benefits are well worth the investment. A mulch application can last for two to three years, but you may want to touch it up with small amounts each year. You will also be watering and weeding less and improving your soil at the same time.

### Application is Important

Apply a two to four inch thick layer of mulch evenly out to the drip line of the tree or plant if possible. Leave a few inches of bare ground around the stem or trunk. Avoid applying mulch "volcanoes" or burying the trunk in mulch as this will cause the lower trunk to decay. The mulch ring should resemble a doughnut not a volcano. Once you have mulched, make sure your irrigation



A good tree ring of mulch should look more like a "donut" than a "volcano". If possible, get rid of grass in the root zone area.

water penetrates and reaches the soil. Any water absorbed by the mulch will help in retaining soil moisture.

Did you know that trees grow better and have a thicker root system when the root zone is mulched versus a tree growing in a grassy area? If your tree had a say in the matter, mulch the entire root zone like a tree in the forest and get rid of the grass.

What kind of mulch should you use? There are organic and inorganic kinds. Inorganics include lava rocks, landscape fabrics and river rock, but these are not recommended for general use. If you choose inorganic mulches and later decide to remove it or plant into it you will have a big challenge.

Collier Arbor Care recommends organic mulches because of the wonderful benefits for soil improvement and root growth. There are two major types of organic mulches in our area: (1) composted mulch and (2) Fresh (non-composted) Mulch.

**Composted mulch** is the most desirable for amending and improving soil, but it does not suppress weeds well. Compost adds nutrients and promotes a healthy micro-biology in the soil. If you have a heavy clay soil, till in compost to help break it up.

**Fresh Mulch** such as bark or shredded mulch and arborist's wood chips are the best for weed suppression. There are many grades of bark mulch from fine to coarse or made from hemlock or fir, just choose the color and texture you like the

best. The fresh mulches have a minor issue with taking nitrogen from the soil which can easily be corrected by a small addition of an organic nitrogen fertilizer.

So which organic mulch should you use? We like using both! Put a half-inch thick layer of composted mulch down first then use a two to four-inch deep layer of bark mulch over the top.

Questions about your soil quality? Call today and let Collier Arbor Care help with a free Soil Health consultation!



Wood chips (fresh mulch, above) or composted mulch (below) are both good options for adding nutrients to the soil feeding your trees and shrubs.