

Selection and Planting of Evergreen Trees

N the September issue of THE NATIONAL GREEN-KEEPER details were given for the planting of deciduous trees. In general the details for planting evergreens are quite similar to those practiced in the planting of deciduous trees. There are many points of difference, however, and since evergreens are being planted generally every year, it is decidedly worthwhile to give considerable study to the requirements of the various evergreens.

Too often one sees beautiful and expensive plantings of evergreens declining rapidly, and one might say hopelessly, because too little consideration has been given to the plans for establishing the evergreen groups.

Fall planting of evergreens is practiced extensively throughout the country. Success often times accompanies this planting because during late August, September and early October is a period during which the evergreens are particularly inactive. Following this season is usually a period of rather rainy weather during which the roots have an opportunity to grow and establish themselves for the winter.

The best time for planting evergreens comes at a period in the spring, usually extending from the last of March to the middle of May. At this time the trees have gone through the rigors of winter and in a very short time will start into their early season growth, so that in a remarkably short time they can replace the parts destroyed and be in reasonably good health to continue on indefinitely.

Spring Planting Best in North

With the exception of the southern sections fall planting is not to be recommended. When one realizes the difficulties attending fall planting, it is quite obvious that spring planting is far better. Regardless of the care exercised in the planting operation, it is quite obvious that many of the feeding roots will be destroyed. When the roots have been destroyed, it is impossible for the evergreens to go into winter conditions full of

water. Since the leaves stay on the trees throughout the winter, great quantities of water are evaporated whenever the weather is at all mild and smaller quantities are given off even in severe weather. At the same time the ground is usually frozen which prohibits the absorption of additional water from the soil. Obviously the loss of water which the roots are unable to replace, has a tendency to cause the foliage and twigs to dry out to such an extent that death results. This so called winter killing is quite a serious trouble with trees which have not been disturbed in the fall. It is certainly logical to conclude the trees handicapped by the shock and damage of transplanting cannot possibly go through this critical period as successfully as trees without this additional handicap.

Fall Planting Better for South

In southern sections where the winters are not so severe and where the ground is not frozen during long periods of time, fall planting is recommended and is usually considered better than spring planting. In these southern sections the severest and most trying periods for trees are the exceedingly hot, dry summer months. Fall planted trees have an opportunity to become better established before this period than do spring planted trees.

Choose Locations Natural to Each Tree

Before planting evergreens, the most careful study should be given to the soil, the water and light relations of the location in which the trees are to be planted. When these facts have been determined, it is then necessary and essential to pick trees which will fit the conditions under which they are expected to live. It is not at all unusual to see pines planted in heavy, wet clay soil where they are more or less shaded by other and larger trees. Under such conditions the pines are doomed before they are set. They can neither survive with the heavy, wet soil nor with the shade which they have to endure. At the same time it is not unusual to see Arbor Vitaes planted on hot, dry, sandy knolls when their natural place to grow is in low swampy ground.

The list which would include practically all of the evergreens ordinarily planted, would be made up of the various pines, a number of varieties of spruce, a few firs together with one or two varieties of hemlocks. The white cedar group would include not only the white cedars themselves, but also the numerous members of the horticultural Retinosporas. The Arbor Vitaes with their many beautiful and attractive varieties, the junipers, a few members of the yews and the Douglas fir, would about complete the list. Although the larch is not an evergreen, it should be included in the list because of its close relationship with the members mentioned above.

The Pine Seeks the Sun

The twenty-five or more species of pine together with the hundreds of horticultural varieties make up a large proportion of the evergreens used for planting. Careful observations of the situations in which the pines do best is sure to impress one with the apparent thrift of these trees. Practically all of them flourish best on moderately dry, rocky, sandy and gravelly soils. Some of them, it is true, will do well in the richer, heavier soils, but in nature one always finds them doing best in the soils to which they are most suited. It is in such a location that they are able to survive and surpass other trees which may try to get a start. Another point worth noting, is the fact that one seldom finds a young pine tree doing well under other trees. With this fact in mind the only natural conclusion to reach is that the pine trees will not do well in the shade. With these facts in mind it seems that one could much more intelligently pick the spots where the pine trees would grow most satisfactorily. It certainly would be better than to just go out, dig a hole and put a pine tree in it.

Spruce and Pine in Close Relationship

In making observations of the spruce group, the most impressive feature is the fact that they are primarily a northern tree. The only time that one finds them in the south is when they grow so high in the mountains that the temperatures are approximately the equal to those of the more northerly sections. The spruces are as exacting in their light requirements as are the pines. In other words, one cannot expect a spruce to do well when shaded either by buildings or other trees. As a general rule the spruce trees desire a rich, well drained soil, although occasionally, especially with the red and black spruce, one may find them growing in soil which is almost swampy. However, even these which can and do adapt themselves to swampy ground do equally well when planted in the drier sections.

Choose Cool, Damp Location for Firs

Some of the most beautiful and ornamental evergreens are the firs. They are being planted more and more and justly so. The firs do best in rich, damp, cool soil. They will succeed quite well in swampy ground. Consequently when one desires the best possible results, one should select the location for planting the fir trees that is best adapted to the natural surroundings in which these trees thrive.

Hemlocks Do Well in Shade

One of the most widely planted of the evergreens is the hemlock. Fortunately it is one of the most desirable and one of the most adaptable to unfavorable conditions. It is difficult to transplant, but its beauty and grace amply pay for the additional care needed in successful planting. Fortunately hemlocks will do well in the shade and it is about the only evergreen that can succeed under these adverse conditions. It can adapt itself to moderately dry soil, but it does best in cool, rich almost wet places.

Plant Junipers Anywhere

It seems to make little difference to a juniper whether the soil is rich or poor, wet or dry, hot or cold; it goes ahead building itself into a decidedly worthwhile specimen.

Don't Overlook the Douglas Fir

The Douglas fir is one of the giant trees of the western coast which has been brought to all sections of the country because of its wonderful beauty. It makes its best growth in rather rich, deep, moist soil. When one plants it with the hope of securing a specimen tree of this variety, such a location should be selected for it. It is seldom advisable to make large plantings of this tree, but it is certainly worthwhile to plant a few as specimens for variation in the evergreen planting.

The Low-Growing Yew

Last and almost least, come the yews. They are not planted very extensively, but show such individuality it is often times well to have a few of them. They do best in cool, shady, moist places and although they seldom grow into trees, they have their mission to fulfill and are decidedly worthwhile when planted in the right place.

Summarizing the information contained in the preceding paragraphs, one might say to plant pines, spruces and junipers in the dry, light, sandy, poor soils where they have abundant sun light. Plant firs and Douglas firs in the rich, moderately dry places; white cedars, Retinosporas and Arbor Vitaes in the wet, swampy places; hemlocks and yews in the shady places. Of course it does not mean that these trees are so exacting in their requirements that they will not succeed when all of the conditions are not exactly as described in this article. For example, after a hemlock has once become established in the sun it does even better than it does in the shade and a pine tree does wonderfully well in a rich, moderately, moist soil. Occasionally one sees Arbor Vitaes doing well on dry, gravelly slopes. How-

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Planting Evergreens

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ever, when one wishes to secure the best possible results, in the planting of evergreens, it is well worthwhile to take into consideration the desires and requirements of the various trees.

Swamp-loving Evergreens

The white cedars Retinosporas, and Arbor Vitaes are all very close related and probably make up nearly half of all the different evergreens which are planted. Because they are planted in such large numbers and so often in places entirely unsuited for them, failures are very common. These trees in nature grow luxuriantly in deep swamps and marshes. Often times they make up almost entirely the trees along rivers and the borders of swamps. They grow so luxuriantly under these conditions that they are able to force out willows, poplars, and other equally swamp loving trees. When the needs of these trees are such it seems utterly foolish to plant them on high, dry, sandy knolls and well drained slopes. Entirely too often are they so placed that they struggle along for a few years and then give up the struggle to the great disappointment of the one who ignorantly planted them where it was utterly impossible for them to succeed.

Since the larch was mentioned in the early part of this article as a tree belonging in the group of evergreens, although it is not an evergreen, it is well to give its requirements at this point. Requirements of the larch are almost identically the same as those of the cedars and Arbor Vitaes. One may secure a stunted, scrawny specimen when the larch is planted in moderately dry soil, but in order to ge the best it should be planted in places such as those described for the immediately preceding species.

Junipers Flourish With Little Encouragement

Quite often it is necessary to select some evergreen which will grow in poor, rocky, dry, waste ground. When such is the case, select the junipers. There are many beautiful and desirable species together with scores of horticultural varieties. This makes up the group of evergreens that you can expect to grow into beautiful, worthwhile specimens, even though the soil is so poor that it is impossible to get anything to grow.

Editor's Note: Mr. Scherer, in submitting the foregoing article for publication in the National Greenkeeper, said, "I only wish the information contained in this article could be broadcast to every person who is thinking of planting an evergreen tree." Now that you have read it once, you'd better go over it again.



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