

Chemical Injury on Evergreens

Evergreens are sometimes injured by chemicals. The main sources of injury are salt, herbicides, and swimming pool chemicals.

Salt can come from two sources. The first, and most common, source is road salt. The spray kicked up by passing cars will blow to nearby evergreens. If the injury is slight the plant may just yellow. If the injury is severe the needles may be killed and the branch may not grow.

Road salt can be in run-off from roads and, to a lesser extent, sidewalks. This type of injury looks different. The lowest branches to show the injury will be on the side of the tree closest to the source of the salt. The injury will move progressively up to higher branches and most often in a spiral pattern.

Road salt is less of a problem in the root zone in wet springs because the rain washes it below the roots. Injury is more severe in dry springs.

Salt that lands on evergreens as a spray is more difficult to deal with. Low evergreens can be protected from the spray by tar-backed burlap screen. Larger plants can not be protected by any practical method.

Salt from drainfields containing softened water occasionally causes injury to evergreens. The symptoms are as described for road salt. Little can be done for this type of injury.

Weed killers, particularly those that kill all types of vegetation often cause the spiral pattern of dead branches.

Some evergreens are killed when swimming pool filters are back washed and the water is used to water the plants. There is often no spiral pattern instead the plant just turns uniformly brown.

