

Wrapping Cedars



Wrapping cedars during the winter is a common practice to protect the plants from various winter-related stresses. Here's why it's important:

Winter Burn:

- **Desiccation (Drying Out):** During the winter, especially on sunny and windy days, cedars can lose moisture through their needles faster than they can absorb it from the frozen ground. This results in "winter burn"; foliage turns brown and may die off. Wrapping helps reduce moisture loss by shielding the tree from harsh winds and direct sunlight. Watering the cedars until the ground is frozen helps to avoid winter burn.

Heavy Snow and Ice Damage:

- **Branch Breakage:** Ontario winters can bring heavy snow and ice, which accumulates on cedar branches, causing them to bend, split, or break. Wrapping helps hold the branches together, reducing the risk of breakage under the weight of snow and ice.

Temperature Fluctuations:

- **Sunscald:** Sudden temperature fluctuations, especially when the sun warms the bark during the day and temperatures drop rapidly at night, can cause the bark to crack. Wrapping provides insulation against these temperature changes.

Animal Damage:

- **Browsing by Deer and Other Wildlife:** In winter, when food is scarce, deer and other animals may feed on the foliage of cedars. Wrapping the trees can deter animals from nibbling on the branches.

Salt Damage:

- **Road Salt Exposure:** Cedars near roads or driveways that are salted during winter, risk damage to foliage and root by salt. Wrapping can provide a barrier against salt spray.

How to Properly Wrap Cedars:

- **Materials:** Use burlap or a similar breathable fabric. Avoid plastic, as it can trap moisture and lead to mold growth.
- **Timing:** Wrap your cedars in late fall, before the first heavy snowfall, and remove the wrap in early spring after the last frost.
- **Technique:** For individual plants, start wrapping from the base and work your way up, overlapping slightly with each pass. Secure the burlap with twine, but don't wrap too tightly, as this can restrict airflow and cause other issues.

Wrapping a Cedar Hedge

If you have a row of cedars to wrap, you may create a simple structure around the hedge to protect the cedars, rather than wrapping each one. Follow the directions below, and please consult one of our horticulturalists with any questions.

Materials:

- Burlap: Enough to cover the entire length and height of the cedar row.
- Staple Gun: To secure the burlap to the wooden stakes.
- Wooden Stakes & Hammer: To create a framework around the cedars. These should be taller than the cedars. You will require minimum of 4 stakes (two at each end) plus some in the middle for support, if the hedge is longer than 6-7 feet.

Step-by-Step Instructions:

- Measure the height and length of the cedar row to determine how much burlap and stakes you'll need. Keep in mind, depending upon how tall your cedars are, and how wide the burlap is, you may have the need to overlap the burlap to reach the height of the cedars.
- Cut the burlap into manageable sections if you have a long row of cedars. Ensure each piece is tall enough to cover the height of the trees, or it can be overlapped to ensure full coverage.
- Place the stakes about 6 inches to a foot away from the trees and pound them into the ground. This needs to be done before the ground freezes in late fall. Stakes should be placed a maximum of 6' apart, for longer hedges.
- Begin at one end of the cedar row. Hold the burlap at the base of the first stake and staple the burlap to the stake.
- Wrap the burlap around the outside of the stakes, for the length of the hedge.
- As you wrap, use twine or rope to secure the burlap at intervals, especially at the top, middle, and bottom of the trees or stakes. This helps keep the burlap in place and prevents it from being blown away by wind.
- If the burlap is too loose, tighten it gently to ensure it stays in place through the winter.

Tips:

- Secure burlap to allow for some airflow, which prevents mold and mildew.
- Use breathable materials like burlap. Avoid plastic as it can trap moisture and cause damage to the cedars.
- Remove the burlap in early spring after the last frost to allow the trees to get full sunlight and air circulation.
- Be sure to water the cedars until the ground freezes. This helps to ensure they have enough moisture throughout the winter months.
- Fertilizing: Once the spring arrives and the ground warms up (mid-late spring), feed your cedars with a fertilizer high in nitrogen.