



Yew Problems

Yews have few serious insect or disease problems. When a yew does die, the common cause is “wet roots.” And, the homeowner usually causes the problem. Anything that keeps the roots of the plant wet for an extended period of time will cause root rot and resulting death of the plant. Yews are more sensitive to the “wet root” problem than almost any other plant.

Plants located near a downspout or under a leaking gutter connection are usually the first to show symptoms of the problem. You can correct the problem by connecting a drain to the downspout to move water away from the plants. Proper sealing of gutter connections can protect the plant under a leaky area.

Another common problem is planting the yew too deep. Tight clay soils are usually poorly drained to start with. If you have good soil, plant the yew no

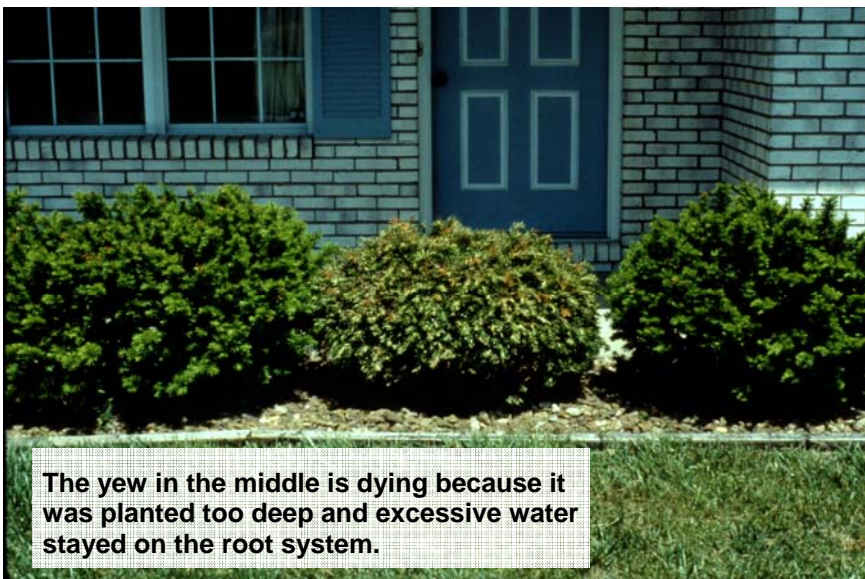
deeper than it was in the nursery. If you have poorly-drained soil, raise the planting depth.

Do not use black plastic around the base of yews because it can keep the roots continually wet. Instead, use a mesh-type material that lets water pass through and evaporate from around the plant. Professionals will plant on raised areas and alter soil conditions to provide drainage when using any material around the plant. Occasionally in the spring, you may see that small twigs at the ends of branches have turned brown. This browning is winter damage. The brown branch tips should be pruned back.

Yews have few insect problems. Scale is the problem most likely to occur, and different types of scale infest yews. You need to know the type of scale to determine when controls should be applied. To control scale, chemical products must be applied while the scale is in the crawler stage. Once the hard, scaly shell develops over the crawler, chemical control is not as effective.

The black carpenter ant and the termite can occasionally infest the trunk of an older yew. Both are capable of excavating the trunk and nesting in the trunk. This infestation rarely occurs and can be controlled with a chemical application.

The black vine weevil, or taxus weevil, has also been found on yews in Illinois. The larvae of the black vine weevil feed on the roots of the plant, consuming the



The yew in the middle is dying because it was planted too deep and excessive water stayed on the root system.

smaller roots. The adults appear during early or late June. There is only one generation per year. The adults feed on foliage during the day and hide at the base of the plant at night. The adults make a crescent-shaped feeding wound on the leaf margin. This feeding damage can be an indication of root feeding damage by larvae that may also be occurring. At the time feeding first occurs, you can apply a soil drench using an approved insecticide.

Pruning

When yews are growing well, prune every spring and again in mid-June to maintain their shape and compactness. Cut back the current season's growth to a cluster of side branches. Make angle cuts whenever possible. Minor pruning can be done any time during the growing season.



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