

BROADLEAF EVERGREENS

Broadleaf evergreens are simply a category of hardy shrubs that hold their leaves through the winter and have large, flat leaves instead of needles. Common varieties are boxwood, rhododendrons and holly which are popular as foundation, hedge or specimen plantings. Broadleaf evergreens can be particular about a few cultural requirements, but don't let their picky tendencies sway you from incorporating these beauties into the landscape.

The first important matter is placement. Most broadleaf evergreens need a protected spot, preferably on Eastern or Northern exposure. Although some perform well in full sun or full shade, the majority would like a dappled combination of the two. Winter sun and wind can be especially detrimental so make sure they have some protection in the winter as well as the summer.

Broadleaf evergreens do not want to dry out entirely, but will decline or drown if they are consistently soggy. Start by properly amending the soil, since heavy clay soil is not ideal for broadleaf evergreens. Add compost and peat moss to the planting hole to help build a rich, loamy, well-draining home for the plant. Give each plant the equivalent of one inch of rainfall a week, during the growing season, and one inch per month over the winter. Regular, consistent watering is critical for broadleaf evergreens. They are not "plant it and forget it" type plants!!

As already mentioned winter can be tough on this group of plants. This is because winter sun and wind are drying, and broadleaf evergreens have a lot of surface area exposed – unlike needle pines. The leaves readily transpire moisture, and if the ground is frozen they cannot pull moisture from the root, causing a condition called winter burn. The best way to prevent this is by spraying an anti-desiccant, like Wilt-Stop. This spray coats the leaves and seals in the moisture so it can't escape. Spray all broadleaf evergreens once between Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Broadleaf evergreens tend to be slow-growing and so do not require much pruning. This will allow you to see the natural body of the plant before trimming. Some, like holly and boxwood can be kept trimmed to any form, but for the common homeowner just an occasional annual pruning, if any at all, is necessary.



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