

Pine Trees



Afghan Pine Tree

General Information:

There are several varieties and sizes of pines that grow in Las Vegas. With adequate watering, many pines tolerate our desert climate quite well.

The amount of water a pine requires varies depending on the species, but pines typically need the equivalent of between 1" and 3" of rain per week. For smaller pines, this can be 100 to 200 gallons per week, but larger trees might need 10 or more times as much. In addition to the amount, watering should cover everywhere under the drip line of the tree. (The area shaded if the sun is directly overhead.) A few drip emitters near the base of the tree is insufficient no matter how much water is put down. If the emitters are not placed correctly, pines will slowly decline after a turf conversion. You will see a paler color, and fewer and fewer needles in the canopy every year until it starts having more serious problems.

Most pines prefer full sun. Pines tend to drop their needles in shaded areas, so if a pine is planted close to another tree or a building, that side will drop all of its needles. If a pine is not properly thinned, the center needles will die out due to shade from the thicker, outer growth of needles.

Trimming:

Pines usually only need to be trimmed about once every 3 years in Las Vegas. Sometimes all that is necessary is to go through and shake out the dead needles in order to let light penetrate to all parts of the tree. It is important to make sure the tree is not "lion-tailed" or otherwise improperly pruned. "Lion-tail" pruning is where all growth near the trunk is removed, and only tufts of needles are left at the end of the branch. Pines grow only from the tips of the branches, and do not sprout new limbs or have any type of sucker growth. Any tree that is pruned this way will have no new growth to fill in the inside of the tree again. The ends of the branches will become heavy and will droop down and eventually break.

Pruning should only be done during the cooler months of the year. Pruning cuts made during the summer often never heal, and the tree can bleed sap from these wounds for years.



A Properly Pruned Pine Tree



Borer Larvae Feeding on Pine Tree

Common Pests!

The two most common pests of pines in Las Vegas are aphids and borers. Aphids are sucking insects that feed on the sap of the tree in much the same way a mosquito feeds on us. Aphids are tiny, but can attack in large numbers. Look for shiny needles and sap dripping under the tree to indicate aphids. These can be treated with either a systemic or sprayed insecticide.

Borers are the other common pest of pine trees in Las Vegas. There are different kinds, but what they all have in common is that they all only attack trees that are under stress. Adult borers lay eggs in a stressed pine tree and their larvae feed on the tree, often killing it. While there are insecticides to treat borers, the best defense is to have a healthy tree. This involves proper irrigation, pruning, and fertilization.