BARTLETT TREE EXPERTS
SCIENTIFIC TREE CARE SINCE 1907

Plant Health Care Recommendations for Italian Cypress

Cultural Information

Italian cypress (*Cupressus sempervirens*) is a large columnar shaped tree that is widely used in Texas landscapes. Native to Europe and Asia, Italian cypress usually grows 30 to 40 feet high, but seldom exceeds 10 feet in width. Because of its unique shape, this species is used primarily as an accent plant. It is ideal for lining driveways and entryways, and to soften tall buildings. Its compact growth habit is also useful in formal gardens.

Italian cypress is well adapted to hot, dry climates. Drought tolerance makes it suitable for use in areas that receive little rainfall or in landscapes without irrigation. The species does require full sun and well-drained soil. In fact, shading, excessive irrigation and poor soil drainage account for many of the pest and other problems that plague Italian cypress in Texas landscapes.

Italian cypress has minimal pruning requirements other than removal of dead branches and errant limbs that occasionally protrude from the canopy of the plant. However, as mentioned, it is susceptible to several serious problems typically encountered when growing conditions are less than ideal.

As with most conifers, Italian cypress is very sensitive to root collar disorders. Soil or even mulch that is placed over the root collar and against the stem tissues can impede establishment of new plantings and predispose them to girdling roots and diseases. The most serious disease resulting from root disorders and poor soil conditions is Phytophthora root rot.

Careful monitoring of irrigation systems to prevent excess soil moisture is vital to preventing this disease. During years of heavy rainfall, or where irrigation is excessive, preventative soil treatments with fungicides may also be necessary.

In addition to Phytophthora, several other diseases attack this species. A number of twig and branch canker fungi, which cause sporadic dieback, have been found in Italian cypress. These diseases are most prevalent when the tree is grown in partial shade, is stressed by low temperatures (winter injury) or when root collar disorders are present.

Insect infestations can also adversely affect the health of Italian cypress. Spider mites, certain scale insects and bagworms are all common pests in Texas landscapes. Regular inspections for infestations are essential so that the necessary treatments can be applied before pests reach damaging levels.

Recommended Maintenance Schedule for Italian Cypress

Timing	**Treatment**
Late Winter	Treat for spruce spider mite if present. Collect samples for nutrient and pH analysis. Submit root samples for Phytophthora analysis if plants exhibit decline. Prune to improve shape and to eliminate dead, dying, and objectionable branches.
Early Spring	Monitor for spider mites and treat as needed. Inspect and excavate mulch from root collars. Add additional mulch to root zone if needed. Apply fertilizers and soil amendments to adjust pH based on soil test results. If necessary, apply fungicide soil drenches to suppress Phytophthora root rot.
Late Spring	Monitor for spider mites and bagworms and treat as needed. Monitor irrigation and soil moisture levels to prevent root disease.
Early Summer	Monitor spider mites and bagworms and treat as needed. If necessary, apply fungicide spray treatments for control of twig blight. Monitor irrigation to prevent root disease.
Mid Summer	Monitor spider mites and bagworms and treat as needed. Apply fungicide spray treatments on plantings that have been severely affected by twig blight in previous years. Inspect tree for canker diseases and prune out any affected twigs and branches. Reapply a soil drench for root disease if needed.
Late Summer	Monitor spider mites and treat as needed. Apply additional fungicide spray treatments on plantings that have been severely affected by twig blight in previous years. Monitor irrigation and soil moisture levels to prevent root decay.
Fall	Continue monitoring for spider mites and treat as needed. Reapply soil treatments for root disease suppression if needed.