SUNSTAR NURSERIES LTD INFO SHEET:

FALL NEEDLE SHED/DROP

What is FALL NEEDLE SHED?

Fall needle shed is a natural seasonal phenomenon wherein evergreen conifers such as pines, spruce, fir and cedars shed their oldest needles each year starting in late summer and continuing into autumn.

The oldest, interior needles turn yellow/brown while younger needles at the tips of the branches stay green. This yellowing and dropping of the interior needles occurs uniformly from the top to the bottom of the tree.

When, and how dramatic Fall Needle Shed occurs varies with tree species, the season's weather conditions and individual tree health.

Signs of FALL NEEDLE SHED:

- Yellowing/browning of oldest interior needles (those closest to trunk of tree) in late summer & fall.
- Shedding (falling to the ground) of oldest interior needles (those closest to trunk of tree) in late summer & fall.
- Eastern White Pines usually have the most extreme fall needle shed
- Cedars also go through a fall yellowing of foliage (known as "branchlets") from the interior of the tree. As with evergreens with needles this is normal, so long as it occurs in fall and discolouration occurs from the inside (not the outer tips of branches.) Cedars tend to hold onto these yellow/brown branchlets through winter and even indefinitely but they are usually hidden by the new green growth in the following growing season.

Control of FALL NEEDLE SHED:

Needle shed is a normal part of an evergreen's life cycle and therefore no action is necessary so long as your tree is otherwise healthy. If the yellowing is excessive it can be a sign of stress in the tree. Stress can be caused by drought, excess moisture or a host of other issues.

If you are noticing yellowing/browning/shedding of needles at the tips of the trees branches there is likely another issue at play and an arborist or tree expert should be consulted to determine the cause and treatment.

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Referances:

https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/fall_needle_drop_a_natural_phenomenon_in_conifers

Normal fall needle shed on Eastern White Pine